

KLEOS

AMSTERDAM BULLETIN OF ANCIENT STUDIES AND ARCHAEOLOGY



Kleos - Amsterdam Bulletin of Ancient Studies and Archaeology

ISSUE 6, 2023

Kleos - *Amsterdam Bulletin of Ancient Studies and Archaeology* is a peer-reviewed, open access academic online journal, launched in 2014, which publishes current research and review articles by graduate and PhD students, as well as starting independent researchers, from the fields of archaeology and ancient studies (i.e. classics and ancient History). Kleos also provides reviews of recent books, conferences and exhibitions. The journal is published once a year and its main goal is to provide a possibility to graduate and PhD students to publish their research. The journal thus mainly aspires to serve as a platform for starting academic careers, and help students and starting researchers to share their research, gain experience in publishing, and improve their scientific skills. At the same time the journal aims to provide an overview of the research being conducted within the fields of archaeology, ancient history and classics, and support the interdisciplinary dialogue between these adjacent academic disciplines.

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ISSN

2468-1555

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The sixth Kleos issue is out! As always, we are proud to present the work of starting scholars of (r)Ma and PhD-level. The papers included in the issue cover a wide range of subjects, ranging from the events of 70 AD, which marked an important point in Jewish history, to the reception and manipulation of the figure of King Alfred of Wessex in modern fan fiction. As is our custom, you will find the papers ordered in chronological order, leaving aside disciplinary divides.

The first paper, entitled *A New Periodisation? Recent Innovations in Studies on the Impact of the Destruction of the Second Temple*, is written by Florence Cobben. As the title suggests, the article introduces the historiographical debate on the destruction of the Second Temple of Jerusalem in 70 AD. The author presents different interpretations of this event and how this came to be viewed as a watershed moment in Jewish history. In doing so, the author effectively questions long-standing and sometimes anachronistic interpretations of historical events and formed time periods.

In the second paper, entitled *Investigating the identity of Mezurashizuka decorated tomb's painting: introducing a new perspective*, Claudia Zancan dives into the materialisation of the society of the Late Kofun period on the island of Kyūshū in Japan. Through the analysis of the style, iconography and iconology of the recovered materials and preserved decorations, the author reveals the hybrid nature of the artistic production, material culture, grave goods produced by a society which merged elements of peninsular origin with local culture.

In the third article, *Social and Religious Differences in the Rural Village of Gózquez (San Martín de la Vega, Madrid, Spain)*, Silvia Berrica discusses how a comprehensive and multidisciplinary study of both the materiality and stratigraphic research can shed new light on social and religious differences shift of Early Medieval Spain. Exploring the settlement and cemetery at Gózquez, the author analysis the transition between the Visigoths and the Moors in central Spain.

The fourth research paper, written by Aurora Hamm and entitled *German and French Colonial Restitution – 'New Relational Ethics' or Using the Legacy of Empire?* Examines the way colonizer states make use of objects to build their relations with former

colonized countries. This leads into a discussion about the role the materiality of these objects plays in said relationship, while further looking into the layered meanings they have.

For the Dialogue Papers section, the sixth Kleos issue presents a dialogue article by Martine Mussies and Dr. Mar Guerrero-Pico, entitled *Digging King Alfred*. In this dialogue, Mussies presents an innovative analysis of the representations of archaeological artefacts in modern fanfictions of the English King of Wessex. Mussies – and subsequently Dr. Guerrero-Pico – reflect on the use of this online genre to explore how archaeological narratives are being constructed outside academia.

The final paper included in this issue concerns the review by Thomas Hijzen of the events of the *ARCHON Day 2022*, held at the Rijksdienst voor het Cultureel Erfgoed at Amersfoort last October on the theme 'Interdisciplinary Collaborations'. Hijzen outlines the different presentations and goes deeper into some of the theoretical topics which were discussed at this one-day event.

As always, this issue would not have been possible without the help of our anonymous expert peer reviewers. We are extremely grateful to them for taking the time out of their busy schedules to peer review the papers and provide the authors with indispensable feedback.

Our editorial team has gone through some changes in the last year. Our team has been strengthened by three new editors whom we would like to officially give a warm welcome: Daphne de Vos and Aurora Hamm for the Archaeology team and Stefan Dingenmans for the Ancient History team. Even though they have started in the middle of the editorial process of issue 6, they have been an eager and passionate addition to the team. Sadly, three of our editors have decided that Issue 6 will be their last issue, Jamie Dodd, Hanna Hoogenraad and Sara Mura. Jamie has joined the Archaeology group in 2018 and since then has taken a leading role in the work of our English Review team. While Hanna has started her editorial work in 2018, Sara has joined the team in 2021. They have both started their work respectively as chief-editor and vice-chief-editor in 2022 playing an essential role in the editorial team for the last two issues of the journal. We would like to thank them wholeheartedly for their efforts and contribution to Kleos and to papers in the field of classics and archaeology specifically.

Lastly, as is our tradition, the work on our seventh issue has already started. This issue will not only contain regular Kleos papers, but also papers developed in the Archaeology & Memory class of the Archaeology Research Master of the University of Amsterdam. Also, the collaboration with Archon and the publication of the yearly Archon-Day's review will continue in the seventh issue. As such, the next issue promises to be a rich one,

containing a plethora of interesting papers. We hope you look forward to this issue as much as we are enthusiastic to be working on it.

First, however, we hope you enjoy reading this issue!

The Kleos Editorial Team

THE KLEOS EDITORIAL TEAM

A New Periodisation? Recent Innovations in Studies on the Impact of the Destruction of the Second Temple

Florence Cobben

ABSTRACT

In 70 AD, after a brutal five month siege, the Romans sacked Jerusalem and destroyed the Holy Temple. While this has for centuries been seen as a decisive turning point in not only the First Jewish-Roman war, but in Jewish history as a whole, recent developments within scholarship on the topic have begun to challenge the view that Jewish history should mark the events of 70 AD as a “watershed”.

Recent works written by modern scholars, including R. Clements, D. Levine, and J. Klawans, all argue that the importance of 70 AD has been a product of either uncritical history-making influenced by subsequent ancient interpretations, or anachronistic readings of ancient attitudes. These authors have called for new approaches to the topic, which have already been successfully carried out by academics like A. Cohen. This paper summarises the debate and provides further points for consideration and discussion.

INTRODUCTION

Periodisation is not history’s most riveting topic. Not only is it long, painstaking work to propose and defend a new historical framework, but if successful it has a tendency of sending historians back to the drawing board to reconsider everything that was taken for granted until that point. For that very reason it is also important. Historiography for assessing the importance of the destruction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem in 70 AD for the Jewish (and in many cases, Christian and Roman) people is no different. In recent years, the call for a new periodisation that is shifted away from the fall of the Temple has increased, and in reaction, new studies have restated with certainty the importance of 70 AD.

The study of the impact of the destruction has been well recorded, yet this most recent development (since circa 2010) has

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not yet been compiled or discussed so far.¹ The aim of this paper is to outline the arguments of the most significant contributions to this discussion. This new approach argues for shifting the conversation away from 70 AD towards a different year (especially towards 135 AD) and seeks to foreground the immediate reaction of Christian and Jewish people to guide critical historiography.² In addition, the impact of Christian theology on periodisation, and even the historiographical effects of the Holocaust on the study, are significant critiques lodged against this status quo. In addition to summarising the current debate, this paper aims to discuss and clarify considerations for potential future research on the topic. Therefore, the final section of this paper reviews the significant opposition that still defends the importance of the fall of the Temple in 70 AD, and discusses some of the larger issues and potential pitfalls present in this ongoing debate.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The history of the fall of the Second Temple in 70 AD and the First Jewish Revolt (66–73 AD) are recorded most extensively in Flavius Josephus' work *The Jewish War*, supplemented by Tacitus' *Histories*. Judaea lost its independence and became a client kingdom of Rome in 63 BC and came under direct Roman rule in 6 AD, following the deposition of ethnarch Herod Archelaus. Under heavy taxation and oppression (and subsequent retaliatory action by Jewish brigands), Jewish-Roman relations rapidly deteriorated, with the situation reaching a boiling point in 66 AD. The Judaeans joined forces to expel the Romans from Judaea and established a revolutionary government. The ensuing war culminated in the siege and fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD, during which the Jerusalemites were massacred and the Romans sacked and burned the Holy Temple, also known as the Second Temple. With (for example) its inclusion in the meaning of Tisha B'av by rabbinic authorities sometime in the 1st century AD, the event was canonised as one if not the most notable collective trauma(s) the Jewish people suffered.³ Scholars have since extensively discussed its impact: not only was the religious, legal, and social heart of the Jewish people lost in the fall of the Temple, leading the religion into a radically new and Rabbinic direction, but it also marked the birth of Christianity, which now completed its parting of the ways

1 For an extended summary of this previous historiography, see: Goodman 2012; Schwartz 2012; Cohen 2016.

2 135 AD marked the end of the Bar Kokhba revolt, or the Second Jewish Revolt. After this event, Jewish people were banished from entering Jerusalem, and many scholars argue that the consequences of this event marked a massive shift in Jewish history.

3 See for example Mishnah, Ta'anit 4.

with Judaism.⁴ 70 AD's status as an epoch-making event went practically unchallenged until the last four decades.

HISTORIOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

In recapping the difficulties that the founding fathers of modern Jewish history already faced when using periodization centred on the destruction of the Second Temple, D. Schwartz warns the reader of the “perils of committing oneself to an *a priori* conception,” and of “the difficulty of pinning down the significance of the destruction of the Second Temple.”⁵ How this discussion evolved and changed in modern scholarship, starting in the last century, has been divided by Schwartz into three stages. The first stage, which lasted until the mid-1900s, held that the Pharisees were the most authoritative leaders of Judaism during the Second Temple period, the rabbis were their heirs and, therefore, the destruction of the Second Temple did not mark a major shift, other than eliminating the power base of their competitors.⁶ However, in the light of the discovery of the *Qumran texts* in the 1940s and 1950s, the second stage was inaugurated. Now it appeared that the religious landscape of Second Temple Judaism was not as monolithic as first appeared, and that, in fact, the priests seemed to enjoy quite some popularity. Therefore, the destruction of the Second Temple, which saw the power base of the priests destroyed, was quite a watershed. The rabbis were a new and strong competitor.⁷

Ever since the introduction of the so-called ‘Third Stage’ of historiography on the topic (mid-1980s), the theory that the priests of the Second Temple lost their popularity after the destruction of the Temple and priestly Judaism was taken over by Rabbinic Judaism, has been challenged.⁸ Now it appears that the

4 By “parting” many mean the demise of so-called “Jewish Christianity”, either by the loss of its home during the first Jewish War, when the Jerusalem Church (apparently) fled to Pella, or after the Bar Kokhba Revolt (132–135 AD), when Jerusalem became closed to all Jews. Others assume that the Jewish-Christian message became obsolete, both in trying to compete with rabbinic Judaism and the Paul-centric Gentile Christianity. For further discussion on the nature of the “parting of the ways” see Reed 2007, 189–196.

5 Schwartz 2012, 2. Particularly Heinrich Graetz, one of the first historians to write a comprehensive history of the Jewish people from a Jewish perspective, struggled with placing the shift in 70 AD.

6 *Ibid.*, 6–8.

In summary, the priests were descendants of Aaron and in the Second Temple Period operated out of the Temple in Jerusalem. They had special authority to participate in sacred rituals. In contrast to the priests there were a number of influential socio-religious sects, among them the Pharisees. After the destruction of the Second Temple, Pharisaic beliefs became the basis for Rabbinic Judaism. The rabbis were considered teachers and (eventually) operated out of local synagogues.

7 *Ibid.*, 8–11.

8 For sources that provide an overview of this historiography, see footnote 1.

priests only garnered more support after the destruction. The synagogue, previously seen as the heart of Judaism after the loss of the Second Temple and the home of the rabbis, was now seen as the home of the priests.⁹ The rabbis were, in fact, not taking over the leadership of Judaism from the priests, but were instead removed to “their ivory tower, the *bet midrash*”.¹⁰ In essence, Judaism experienced religious continuity through the continued importance of the Temple priests. Meanwhile, the birth of Christianity was also no longer considered to be the result of a ‘parting of the ways’ from Judaism following the destruction – the process of their divide continued at least till 135 AD.¹¹ The current position accepted by most scholars is that the destruction of the Second Temple was met with more continuity than previously assumed, especially in terms of religious life and institutions.¹²

Yet, scholars have also collectively argued for the importance of the destruction. A remarkable number of lives were lost, disrupted, and even subjected to torture. As S. Schwartz argues, “if there is no Judaism without Jews, then the death of large numbers of them cannot leave ‘Judaism’ unharmed, however much theologians may strive to console themselves and others by arguing that this is not the case.”¹³ In fact, according to Schwartz, the events of both 70 AD and 135 AD nearly ended Judaism.¹⁴ The direct impact on religious institutions, while perhaps salvageable for the priests, was still considerable. Most scholars agree the loss of the Temple meant the end of sacrificial practices, and as J. Klawans has summarised, some argue that it spawned religious radicalism, or even propelled rabbis into crises of faith.¹⁵ Even the rise of Gnosticism has been proposed to originate from this crisis.¹⁶ Pilgrimage culture, so important to Jerusalem’s economy, also quickly stopped.¹⁷

Considering this, it is unsurprising that the question “Was the destruction of the Second Temple a watershed in Jewish history?” led to a 2009 symposium and a resulting volume of (almost) the

9 Schwartz 2012, 13–14.

10 Ibid., 14.

11 Most often this view is traced to Simon 1948, xiv–xvi (English translation 1986), but it was notably taken up by Dunn 1999, 239. The “start” of this process differs between sources. Dunn considers the loss of the Temple to be the most important milestone, but several have argued that the teachings of Jesus, the subsequent theologizing of Paul, and/or the “de-Judaization” of the church’s target converts after the Jewish War were the beginning of the process. For more information, see Reed 2007, 191.

12 Clements 2012, 517.

13 Schwartz 2013, 18.

14 Schwartz 2001, 108–109.

15 Schremer 2010, 29.

16 Williams 1992.

17 Goodman 2007.

same name: Was 70 CE a Watershed? This paper argues that this conference launched a new stage of the debate focused on reassessing historiographical practice and assumptions about 70 AD.

A NEW PERIODISATION?

THE CONTRIBUTION OF RUTH CLEMENTS

The importance of the events of 70 AD in historiography was challenged explicitly by R. Clements' 2012 article, presented in 2009 and printed in the volume *Was 70 CE a Watershed?* In this article Clements re-assessed the underlying Christian theology present in historiography that has maintained the importance of the fall of the Second Temple.

Clements argues that in the immediate aftermath of the destruction the role of the Second Temple in the New Testament was minimal. Similarly, in non-canonical post-70 AD literature, such as the *Didache*, the fall of the Second Temple is not mentioned.¹⁸ In fact, Christian writings, like the apocrypha *Barnabas*, hint at a potential restoration of the Second Temple and portray the war and the destruction as purely political events.¹⁹ Among Christians, the theological implications of the destruction were barely discussed.

It was Justin Martyr's *Apologia* and *Dialogue with Trypho*, which were written in the aftermath of the Bar Kokhba revolt (132–135 AD), that argued the Roman destruction of the Second Temple was a result of the crucifixion of Jesus by the Jews and that the Bar Kokhba Revolt "validated" and "made permanent" the desolation, since after the squashing of the Revolt the Jewish community was exiled from Jerusalem and there was now no hope for the restoration of the Temple.²⁰ Crucially, the destruction was proof that the covenant between God and the Jewish people was broken, making the Christians the new chosen people of God.²¹ These two new constructions — Jewish deicide and the new status of Christendom — were added by Justin in the light of 135 AD. Where before the loss of the Temple was not of theological importance and Christians even expressed the opinion that the Temple would be restored, after the Bar Kokhba Revolt restoration was deemed impossible and theological explanations were revised.

As the Jewish people struggled on and survived, Christians kept

¹⁸ Clements 2012, 521. The author of the *Didache* is unknown.

¹⁹ This interpretation of the texts is not necessarily new, many 19th century scholars have commented on the indications in *Barnabas* of an imminent rebuilding of the Second Temple (Gunther 1976 discusses this in more detail). The author of the *Barnabas* is unknown.

²⁰ Clements 2012, 533.

²¹ Ibid.

invoking this narrative to restate the superiority of Christianity.²² Through this process the theological importance of the destruction was exaggerated and indeed made permanent. Considering the evidence, Clements argues the defeat of Bar Kokhba was the real 'watershed' — the events of 70 AD were only seen as significant in the light of 135 AD's finality.²³ Although the interpretation that first generation Christians and even the gospels viewed the events of 70 AD as punishment for the crucifixion can be seen in historiographical works as late as those of Windisch and Schoeps, modern historiography has moved away from this interpretation.²⁴ Yet, Clements argues that it still participates in the same thinking exercise as post-135 AD Christian thinkers by trying to prove the theological impact of the events of 70 AD.²⁵

Authors such as A. Cohen have incorporated Clements' argument in support for 135 AD and have been praised for the intriguing insights that arise from considering this direction.²⁶

OTHER SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTIONS

David Levine

Clements' criticism of traditional periodisation has been taken up and argued by other authors, such as D. Levine. Significant to Levine is, that in the eyes of contemporary Jews, the impact of the events of 70 AD was seen as a significant rift only after 135 AD, similar to the findings Clements found regarding the Christian tradition. Not only does the outbreak of the Bar Kokhba revolt speak strongly for the theory that the Jewish people expected the restoration of the Temple as a result of their rebellion, but, in particular, the traditions that figures recount in the texts of the rabbis indicate not only that the Second Temple did not have to

22 Ibid., 536.

23 Clements 2012, 522.

24 Windisch wrote, examining the first generation of Christian response to the fall of the Second Temple, that "[...] the one main idea [in the writing of the Four Gospels] is always this: the catastrophe of the year 70 was a divine judgment of wrath and it was dispensed over the great blood guilt of the Jewish people and the city of Jerusalem; above all, of course, the guilt of Golgotha [the site of Jesus' crucifixion] is emphasized." (Windisch, 1914, 19; author's translation). Similarly, Schoeps, investigating the attitudes of first century Christians, drew the same conclusions, arguing, "That the fall of Jerusalem, the destruction of the sanctuary, and the scattering of the people are to be regarded as God's judgments on the Jews for the crucifixion of Jesus, is a causal connection which is probably an early Christian belief [...] In its most popular form: The temple of the Jews was destroyed, and the Jews had to go into exile because they killed the Son of God- it is this conviction of the Christian faith which carries on down to our days." (Schoeps, 1950, 147; 150; author's translation). No current scholar would interpret the theological position of Christians pre-Justin on the meaning of the loss of the Second Temple in this way.

25 Clements 2012, 536.

26 Runesson 2018, 225, reviewing Cohen 2016 and Chilton 2017, 279–281.

exist for temple centrality, but that restoration was expected.²⁷ Only after the squashing of the Bar Kokhba revolt of 135 AD and the Jewish people were exiled from Jerusalem, when it became clear the temple would not be restored and the loss of the Second Temple was “made permanent”, did the rabbinic literature shift. Levine calls for a foregrounding of initial Jewish (and Christian) reactions to the fall of the Temple as a “control” in historiography to “avoiding circular reasoning and biased results.”²⁸

Jonathan Klawans

Finally, as recently as 2020, Klawans has again placed emphasis on the nature of Jewish reactions to the fall of the Second Temple and how this should reconfigure historiographical analysis. Unlike Levine, however, who focused on the rabbis, Klawans argued from the perspective of post-70 AD pseudepigraphal literature (2 *Baruch* and 4 *Ezra*) as well as Flavius Josephus’ *The Jewish War*, that Jewish authors mapped the fall of the Second Temple onto the First.²⁹ As a result, just as the First Temple was restored, the Jews expected the Second Temple to be restored. They sinned and were punished; they repented and could now expect restoration. Like Levine, Klawans argues that the physical Temple was not needed for Temple centrality. Crucially, according to Klawans, even though Jewish people were likely distraught at the loss of the Temple, Jewish writing was well equipped to provide them with explanation, comfort, and hope, unlike what the opposing academic narrative of theological crisis might suggest.³⁰

Klawans attributes the narrative of theological crisis to the tendency of 1970s and 1980s historiography to relate the events of the Holocaust back to the fall of the Second Temple (seen in the works of scholars such as B.M. Bokser and others). According to these authors, the lack of and cryptic nature of Jewish sources before 135 AD bespeak a ‘shattered’ Judaism and survivors had to take time to make sense of the enormity of their experience. Similar to the response in the wake of the Holocaust, an initial silent suffering was observed, which was later followed by a vocal expression of traumatic experience.³¹ In other words, the lack of sources discussing the fall was interpreted by these scholars as a result of profound theological trauma, rather than a sign of overall continuity. In reality, Klawans argues, collective trauma does not

27 Levine 2018, 172. See for example Mishnah, Eduyot 8.

28 Ibid., 173.

29 He argues this on the basis of, for example: 4 *Ezra* 10: 27, 44–59; 2 *Baruch* 32: 1–9; Flavius Josephus, *The Jewish War* 6.109–110, 250; Flavius Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 10.210, 276–277.

30 Klawans 2020, 209.

31 See Bokser 1983, 60–61; Goodman 2007, 426–427.

naturally lead to silence, whether literary, artistic, or theological.³² Even though this is not the reigning historical paradigm anymore, Klawans (much like Clements regarding the Christian tradition) sees any attempt to get at a *certain* interpretation of the significance of 70 AD as a lasting effect of this kind of thinking.

According to Klawans, not only should more scholars take the middle ground between “shattered Judaism” and “not much changed”, scholarship should also accept that many Jews in the immediate aftermath of the fall of the Second Temple took a middle of the road position as well — they were distraught but had hope.³³

REBUTTAL

In the wake of this challenge, the opposing side of the debate is defended by S. Schwartz, who has argued, based on both historical as well as historiographical concerns, that the dismissal of the importance of the events of 70 AD is premature. Klawans’ 2020 paper (discussed above) was written in response to two rebuttals by Schwartz, printed in a 2013 and a 2016 paper. In particular, the 2016 paper argues for a renewed effort on the part of Judaic scholars to consult the Roman sources, and especially to review the painstaking work of Roman historians to reconstruct the tangible impact of 70 AD.³⁴ The bulk of Schwartz’s paper is dedicated to re-emphasising the toll the events of 70 AD had on the Jewish population (both in lives lost and lives displaced), the transformation of politics and the organisation of the Jewish nation, the impact on particularly the pilgrim and silver economies, the confiscation and selling of Jewish land, the destruction of cult worship, the massive theological implications of the God of Israel’s defeat, the consequent active and sustained humiliation of the Jews, and even potential exterminations as well as increase in anti-Jewish riots. It is within this wider tragedy that the loss of the Second Temple is situated and should be studied.³⁵ The evidence is sprawling and, taken together, quite compelling. Schwartz believes it took generations for Jewish people to compartmentalise the catastrophe into one of Judaism’s “chosen traumas”. Following a psychological anthropologist’s accounts of collective trauma, he believes the initial response was dominated by unresolved loss, guilt, and shame.³⁶ The call for a new periodisation is so far not a foregone conclusion, especially once Schwartz’ historiographical

³² Klawans 2020, 213.

³³ *Ibid.*, 213.

³⁴ Schwartz acknowledges this is also a failing on the part of Roman historians for not considering culture and religion enough. Schwartz 2016, 234.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 245.

and ethical critiques of the call for new periodisation are considered.

DISCUSSION

Specifically, Schwartz brings forward two primary arguments. The first is to single out the historiographical background influencing the opposing side's argument. Schwartz states that "[Judaic scholars] are heirs of two distinct but in this case complementary intellectual tendencies, idealism and various versions of Jewish or Christian religious traditionalism. For such scholars, the important question is that of the impact of 'the Destruction' on 'Judaism'."³⁷ Within this framework, it is plausible to study works like Flavius Josephus' *The Jewish War* and *4 Ezra* as conforming to the Deuteronomistic model of sin and punishment, then repentance and restoration (seen for example in Klawans's arguments). In texts such as these moments of real grief become ritualised and turned into theological guilt and repentance.³⁸ Yet Schwartz believes this does not imply that these and other Jewish works were successful attempts to "make sense" of the destruction and gave Jewish people "radical hope".³⁹ This feeds into Schwartz's second critique — these texts were attempts by the old clergy or (sub)elite order to hold onto their remaining power and authority. In assuming these texts spoke for 'all Jews' or were able to console them, Klawans and others such as H. Najman do not actually consider the reception of these works.⁴⁰ It is bad practice to attribute to all victims of a tragic event the optimism found in the scholar's text of preference.

Schwartz' criticisms are difficult to rebut. The tunnel vision that inevitably appears from only considering reactions given by either Jewish or Christians writers, rather than informing your research from the wider context provided by Roman sources, means that not only are other factors related to the destruction not taken into consideration, but also, that the potential pitfalls of the literature are not critically assessed. As Schwartz rightly argues: how can you dismiss 70 AD as a watershed moment when only a handful of Jewish and Christian texts (produced by elites and clergy and carefully curated to suit their purpose) were studied for the reactions of an entire people? Levine's work probably comes closest to addressing Schwartz's concerns, although he only discusses the continuities indicated by the Roman literature, rather

³⁶ Ibid., 238.

³⁷ Ibid., 235.

³⁸ Ibid., 236.

³⁹ Ibid., 238.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 236.

than addressing the discontinuities Schwartz describes. Likewise, Klawans has weaved some rebuttals into his 2020 paper, but fails to address the primary concern of projecting the writings of elites onto an entire population.

Schwartz' rebuttal also argues that by minimising the crisis, you invite the risk that the suffering of real people is insufficiently acknowledged. Klawans has acknowledged this and has issued the call for scholars to "think even more carefully about death and survival, and the natural inclinations of those who endure a catastrophe."⁴¹ This is a rather vague request, and it remains a major ethical concern raised by this new periodisation, which is only amplified by the sensitivity of the subject for modern day Jewish people. To grapple with these issues, Klawans calls for a seemingly objective 'middle road' between a "shattered Judaism" and "not much changed". Yet, writers engaging in this discussion must wonder if in cases of massacre, dislocation, torture, and religious defeat a 'middle road' is as objective an approach as it posits itself to be.

What both Schwartz and Klawans also do not discuss is, that for centuries after the event, the destruction has certainly been understood to be epoch-making. To early Christian thinkers, as Clements has demonstrated, the loss of the Second Temple acted not only as (divine) confirmation of, but also (divine) punishment for Jewish deicide. Jewish deicide, in turn, acted as justification for *continued* punishment, now via pogroms, crusade massacres, expulsions, and torture through the centuries.⁴² The loss of the Second Temple is also central to modern Jewish theology — the role of the Wailing Wall as the holiest place that Jewish people can worship at is one such example. The central role placed by the loss of the Second Temple in religious fasts like Tisha B'av, is another.⁴³ Even assuming that Clements and other writers are right to believe Jewish people were relatively optimistic after the fall of the Second Temple, for the rest of Jewish history the meaning the destruction has taken could justify its retroactive importance. Belated consequences of an event are still real consequences.

While all these challenges to the methodology and ethics of detractors of 70 AD are convincing and important to consider, these are strawmen for the main point they are making. Clements, and to a lesser degree, Levine and Klawans, all make clear that the issue at hand is traceable to the influence of the Judeo-Christian tradition on periodisation. Would the events of 70 AD be

⁴¹ Klawans 2020, 209.

⁴² See Kampling, 2005.

⁴³ Tisha B'av is a lamentation of the specific date of the Ninth of Av, as many tragedies befell the Jewish people on that date, including the loss of both Temples.

considered as important and epoch-making, if not for the influence of Judeo-Christian (religious) tradition? Schwartz' approach to defending the importance of 70 AD is to criticise those trying to find the influence of the "the Destruction' on 'Judaism'" and, instead, defend the importance of the destruction based on a practical synthetisation of Roman sources and evidence. Detractors would shift the end of the era from 70 AD in favour of 135 AD to 'correct' the impact of church fathers and rabbis alike, who had a hand in 'inflating' the importance of the destruction. But the effect is that both tiptoe around having to grapple with or properly discuss the impact of (religious) tradition on the 70 AD event, preferring instead to propose alternative solutions to reassess its importance. It is naïve to assume that an 'objective' reading of such an emotionally, politically, and religiously charged event is possible, but the solution should not be to skirt the issue. And that is assuming (religious) tradition in historiography is a problem — outsider influence, especially coming from those who are (or consider themselves) descendants of the historical participants in question, is something that at the very least should be contemplated with care, rather than assumed to be deliberately obscuring the truth. Would it necessarily mean the events of 70 AD were not epoch-making, if its notoriety did stem from theological significance?

The challenge for those arguing for a reconsideration of the periodisation is to rise to meet these criticisms.

CONCLUSION

The primary aim of this paper was to summarise the main arguments for and against a reconsideration of the importance of the fall of the Second Temple in 70 AD, particularly in the context of periodisation. In addition, this paper aimed to discuss the primary concerns and criticisms of the new approach.

Recent calls for a reconsideration of this periodisation were in broad terms based on two concerns: that the current debate is a product of uncritical history-making influenced by ancient interpretations, or that the current interpretation came out of anachronistic readings of ancient attitudes. Therefore, the issue flows both ways — our history writing has become influenced by interpretations that were produced and made mainstream by Church fathers and rabbis writing long after the events of 70 AD, who have narrativized the event to suit their purposes. While these texts are not taken at face value or projected back earlier than their invention anymore, much of the desire to uphold 70 AD as an epoch-making event engages in the same thinking exercise. In turn, historians are also guilty of projecting anachronistic interpretations onto the event, as Klawans argues with the

projection of the experience of the Holocaust onto the loss of the Second Temple. Instead, a call for a middle road between “shattered Judaism” and “not much changed” has been proposed. However, Schwartz has argued that there cannot be any serious interpretation of a “middle ground” when Roman sources suggest that the subject at hand deals with defeat, dislocation, mass murder, and general catastrophe. Reading only the literature of the period, written by elites trying to hold onto power, minimises the collective trauma that may have been felt by the rest of the population. The argument then appears to rest on one essential question: at what point do you go from an objective reading of a calamity, into engaging with the thinking exercises of (later) ancient writers who have clear agendas?

This question is obviously not unique to this topic — scholars from all corners of history-writing come up against this issue again and again. And as in all history-writing there is no definitive answer to this question. The following proposal for future research and considerations to be kept into account is, therefore, tentative. What is clear is one of the primary problems is one of methodology, particularly of sources; every new stage in historical research calls for a “return to the sources” and this one is no different. Schwartz’s argument for situating literary interpretations within the wider political and social landscape sketched by Roman sources is an important and necessary check for discussion of this topic.

While a return to sources is called for, it is also interesting that several of our authors rely on contemporary trauma research to interpret their sources. This interdisciplinary approach to interpreting the impact of an event is promising. Jewish history studies especially have rapidly progressed in the past few decades with regards to interdisciplinary communication and such interaction has provided new and compelling insights into the topic.⁴⁴ However, being aware of the numerous issues in psychological research as well as the many anachronisms a researcher can invite in projecting these findings back thousands of years should be fore fronted and properly compensated for in each study.

Finally, there is something to be said for the current “post-periodisation” era of historiography that we now live in. There is now almost universal agreement that most periodisations are arbitrary but necessary to facilitate the study of history. There is no more talk of perfect overarching, all-encompassing periods — instead, most historians balance multiple periodisations, which are based on different criteria (economic, political, social, theological,

⁴⁴ For a preliminary overview, see Korbel et al. 2020, 1–4.

and so on). These both overlap and contradict each other.⁴⁵ The question has changed from “is such and such event a perfect marker of a universal change?” to “is it sufficiently convincing for the criterion currently being considered?” Applying a “layering” of periodisations to the topic would resolve many (but no doubt not all) of the contradictions discussed in this paper.

⁴⁵ For examples of this in historiography on the Second Temple period, see Levine 20118, 162.

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Investigating the Identity of Mezurashizuka Decorated Tomb's Painting: Introducing a New Perspective

Claudia Zancan

ABSTRACT

Images in non-literate societies are important means of conveying information about cultural and social aspects of the time. The decorated tomb of Mezurashizuka 珍敷塚古墳 (6.^h century CE) is located in today's Fukuoka Prefecture, north of the island of Kyūshū, Japan, and will be the case study of this paper. This tomb is considered to be among the few decorated tombs in Kyūshū influenced by the iconography and iconology of the mainland China. However, the style and most of the elements depicted are of local origin. The painting, therefore, cannot be considered either totally local or entirely influenced by Korean Peninsular culture. What cultural and social information does the Mezurashizuka painting convey? The aim of this paper is to approach the study of this famous *sōshoku kofun* 装飾古墳 (decorated tombs) by considering it as a further element born of centuries of relations and interactions between North Kyūshū and the continent, specifically with the Korean Peninsula. Based on the discussed data, it will be demonstrated how this painting, and more generally the decorated tombs of northern Kyūshū, are the materialisation of cultural and social aspects of interactions in the Yellow Sea, and from centuries of hybridisation with Peninsular material culture. The decorated tombs are a symbol of a local power that did not fully identify with either the central power or the peninsular culture.

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INTRODUCTION

The term *sōshoku kofun* 装飾古墳 refers to ancient Japanese tombs with decorations. These tombs appeared during the Late Kofun Period (475–710 CE) on the northern Kyūshū island, Japan (figure 1), and then spread throughout the Japanese archipelago, to disappear around the 7th and 8th centuries CE.¹ The peculiarity

¹ In this paper, BCE (before common era)/CE (common era) are used for dating instead of BC/AD to not refer to Japan and Asia with a generally Eurocentric worldview, but with a more inclusive one. For a better understanding of the chronology of ancient Japan, see figure 2.



Figure 1.
*Map of the main four
Japanese islands (created
by author).*

of this phenomenon is that it occurred only in the last phase of the Kofun Period and only in specific areas. The wall paintings of these decorated tombs can add a further important piece to the culture of the island of Kyūshū and the prehistoric art of Japan.²

Indeed, images and symbols in non-literate societies — such as the Kofun period — convey important information about identity, society, and shared cultural aspects.³ In particular in the context of funerary art, the subjects painted on the walls assume an important significance both for the deceased and for the society of the living, as they can be a means of communication for negotiating identity or for representing cults and beliefs of the time. Style, being a valuable element for analysing continuity and discontinuity in the archaeological record and for understanding both spatial and temporal distribution, can be fundamental in assessing possible cultural practices.⁴ A variation or choice of a particular style can be linked to the transmission of specific information about identity or a change in the society and/or culture, in which it emerged. Symbols can be a materialised form of ideologies and, with proper reading and interpretation, it is

² In this paper, 'culture' means all the elements shared by a community, not only the tangible elements, but also the intangible aspects that are well recognised by the members of the community and those, who feel they belong to it (Ingold 1994, 329). It is the context, in which meanings are created and exchanged in the form of images, symbols and language, that must be correctly decoded in order to be understood and exchanged (Hall 1997, 2).

³ DeMarrais et al. 1996, 16; Renfrew 2001, 131; Shelach 2009, 81.

⁴ Barnes 1992, 2; Hays 1993, 88; Sanz/Fiore 2014, 7104.

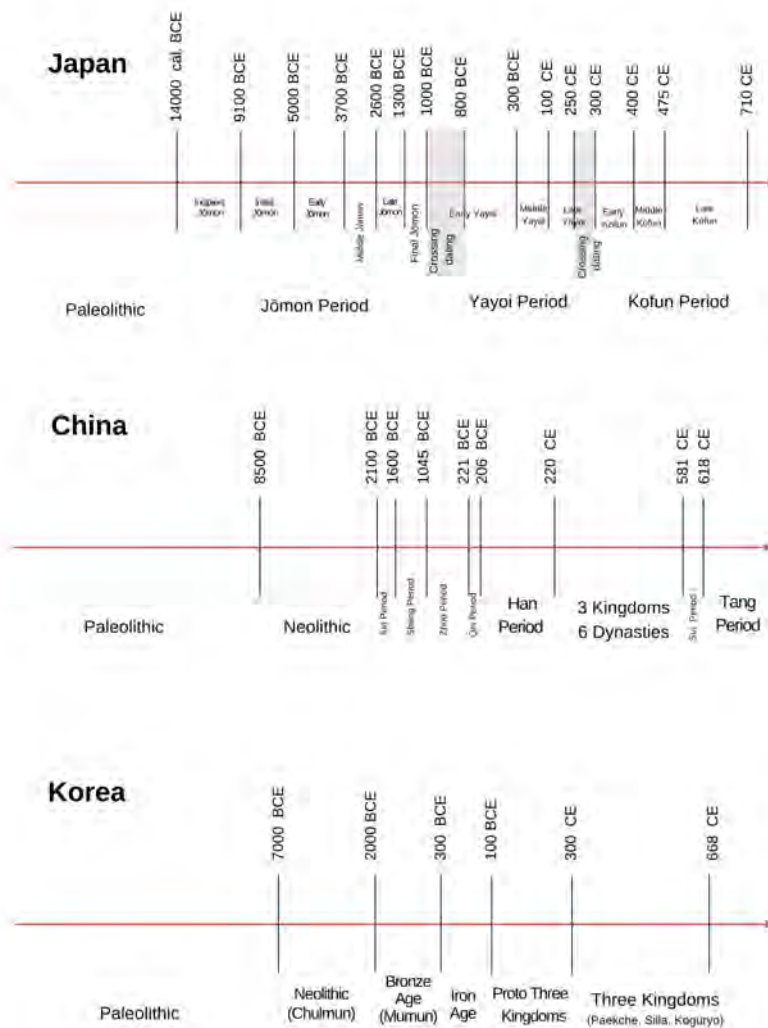


Figure 2.
Timeline of ancient Japan, China, and Korea (created by author).

possible to recognise a specific identity affiliation associated with them.⁵ In this context, the Kyūshū *sōshoku kofun* is an interesting case study for understanding how a non-literate society may have transmitted certain social and cultural information through the creation of decorative motifs.

In this paper, a study regarding the social and cultural information conveyed by the *sōshoku kofun* is presented, focusing on a specific decorated tomb, namely the tomb of Mezurashizuka 珍敷塚古墳, located near Ukiha (Fukuoka Prefecture) (figure 3) and dated to the 6th century CE. Studies of this tomb have placed it among the decorated tombs with explicit continental influences on the iconography and iconology depicted.⁶ The main questions posed are to understand to what extent we can identify peninsular influence on the style, the iconography and on interpreting the

⁵ DeMarrais et al. 1996, 16–17; Conkey 2006, 357–360; Shelach 2009, 78.

⁶ See Shiraishi 1999; Yanagisawa 2022; Kawano 2023.

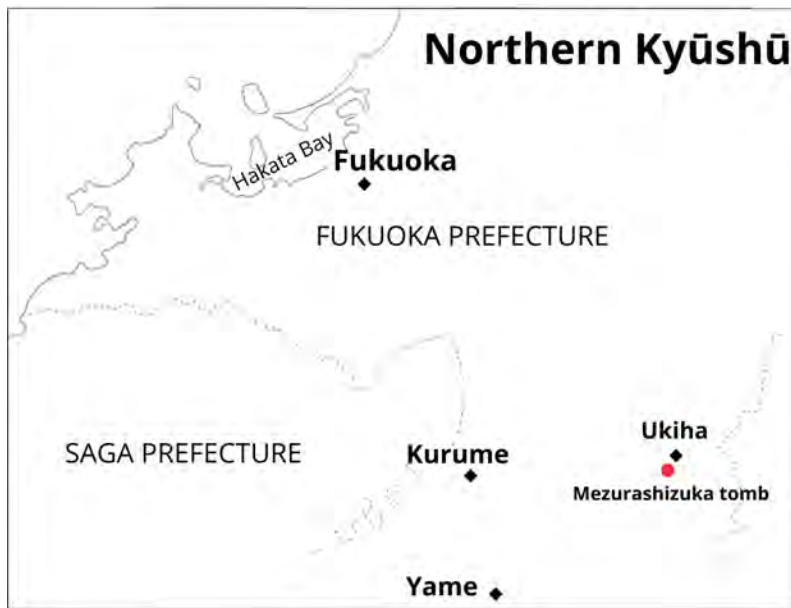


Figure 3.
 Map of the Mezurashizuka tomb's location (created by author).

iconology, and how to explain the presence of both local and Peninsular subjects in the Mezurashizuka paintings. By answering these, this study aims to add new information to the debate on the symbolism and identity represented by the *sōshoku kofun*, focusing on an approach that has never been considered in studies on the subject to date: to not regard the nature of this tomb as totally local or totally influenced by the Peninsula, but as something in between. Indeed, the archaeological context of Kyūshū shows various aspects of material culture, in which local elements were intertwined with peninsular ones to create a new material culture. In contemporary studies on the theme, the decorated tombs of northern Kyūshū are regarded as a local artistic development, in which there was only minimal influence from an iconographic point of view from the tradition of peninsular decorated tombs. Is this really the case, or is there something more?

The archaeological context, in which the *sōshoku kofun* and, therefore, also the tomb of Mezurashizuka, originated will first be briefly presented, emphasising the importance of the interactions between North Kyūshū and the Peninsular cultures. The information presented here will underline how for centuries the society of North Kyūshū was used to interact with a material culture that was not entirely local, but 'mixed'. The mortuary system in-use in the Late Kofun and the perception of the deceased at that time will then be introduced in order to understand how burial was perceived during the period of interest for this research. The main characteristics of the *sōshoku kofun* of Northern Kyūshū will be briefly introduced and the painting of the tomb of Mezurashizuka will be analysed. The information gathered will be discussed to be able to understand the social and

cultural information conveyed by this decorated tomb.

The method of this research is based on a discussion of current studies of the subject, together with data obtained from personal iconographic and iconological analysis of the painting based on E. Panofsky's method of analysis.⁷ In addition, data for comparison with other decorated tombs and the broader context of the *sōshoku kofun* phenomenon are obtained from personal databases.⁸

ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT OF NORTH KYŪSHŪ

For the correct interpretation of the images in the wall paintings of the *sōshoku kofun* of Mezurashizuka, it is necessary to outline the socio-cultural context in which this exchange of meanings occurred.⁹

THE INTERACTIONS WITH THE KOREAN PENINSULA DURING JŌMON (C. 14,500–1000 BCE) AND YAYOI (900 OR 400 BCE – 250 CE) PERIODS

Several studies on the relations between North Kyūshū and the Korean Peninsula since the Jōmon Period have shown that there was direct contact between the peoples of the two regions as well as exchange and influence on some of the material culture produced by both.¹⁰ Although these contacts did not always lead to the creation of a new interwoven material culture, they reveal a familiarity of Northern Kyūshū people with Peninsular art, and symbolism. Table 1 shows some of the most significant evidence of contact and hybridisation in the material culture of Northern Kyūshū during the Jōmon and Yayoi Periods.¹¹

THE KOFUN PERIOD (250 OR 300 CE – 710 CE)

The Kofun Period is characterised by specific socio-political

7 Erwin Panofsky (1892-1968) was an art historian who developed a method of analysis known as iconography and iconology. His approach aimed to unravel the multiple layers of meaning present in works of art. Panofsky's method goes beyond the traditional formal analysis of art and delves into the symbolism, cultural references, and historical context of a given artwork. Iconography refers to the identification and interpretation of visual symbols, motifs, and subject matter within a work of art. Iconology, on the other hand, encompasses a broader investigation into the underlying cultural and intellectual frameworks that shape an artwork. See Panofsky 1972.

8 These databases are compiled by analysing material received from Dr. Kawano Kazutaka and Prof. Maria Shinoto through private correspondence.

9 From an archaeological point of view, Japan is considered 'prehistoric' from the Jōmon Period to the Middle Yayoi, and 'protohistoric' from the Middle Yayoi to the last phase of the Kofun Period.

10 See Miyamoto 2008; Mizoguchi 2013; Barnes 2015; Bausch 2016; Hudson et al. 2021 for studies on the topic.

11 For more information on the Jōmon - Peninsula interactions see: Miyamoto 2008; Shin et al. 2012; Bausch 2016; Lee 2016; Hudson et al. 2021; Nishitani 2020. For more information on the Yayoi - Peninsula interactions see: Barnes 2001a, 2015; Seyock 2003; Rhee et al. 2007; Hashino 2011; Kawakami 2011; Mizoguchi 2013.

PERIOD	CONTACT EVIDENCES	SITE
Early Jōmon	Fragments of Peninsular Chulmun pottery; obsidian flakes and arrowheads; sherds of Peninsular Early Yunggimun pottery	Koshidaka 越高 Koshidaka-Ozaki 越高尾崎 (Tsushima Island)
Early Jōmon	Chulmun stylistic influence on Early Jōmon terracotta indicating a mobility and/or intermarriage: direct contact between potters	North Kyūshū
Middle Jōmon	Chulmun pottery sherds; obsidian arrowheads; cores and flakes	Myōtoishi 夫婦石 (Tsushima Island)
End of Middle Jōmon and the beginning of Late Jōmon	Late Neolithic Peninsular pottery	Yoshida 吉田 Nukashi ヌカシ (Tsushima Island)
End of Middle Jōmon and the beginning of Late Jōmon	Chulmun pottery in a private dwelling	Late Jōmon settlement of Saga shell midden
Last phase of the final Jōmon	Peninsular Mumun red burnished pottery; stone and bronze "Liaoning" daggers; spindle whorls and loom technology; agricultural innovations (rice, barley, wheat, millet)	North Kyūshū
Early Yayoi	The earliest Yayoi pottery would seem to derive from the hybridisation of Mumun and local pottery from the Final Jōmon phase	North Kyūshū
Middle Yayoi	Yayoi Jonokoshi pottery began to be hybridised from Mumun pottery by Peninsular inhabitants of settlements in the Saga Plain	North Kyūshū
Middle Yayoi	Hybridisation in buildings: they were built according to the Peninsular tradition of the Songguk'ni type (two roof supporting posts close to a central depression), while the layout was typical local	village of Etsuji 江辻遺跡 (Fukuoka Prefecture)
Middle Yayoi	Iron tools and cereals (such as wheat and rice) were traded; Samhan and Lelang pottery fragments	Haru-no-Tsuji 原ノ辻 Karakami カラカミ (Iki Island)
Middle - Late Yayoi	'competitive emulation' of symbolic objects found within grave goods: swords, beads, horse harness, bronze mirrors	North Kyūshū

Table 1.

Evidence of interactions between Northern Kyūshū and Peninsular Populations based on the material culture of Kyūshū during the Jōmon and Yayoi Periods (created by author).

developments, that led to the formation of the Japanese state, and is normally divided into three sub-phases: Early (250–400 CE), Middle (400–475 CE) and Late (475–710 CE)¹². The division of these subphases is mainly based on the development of the structure of the typical tombs of this period — the *kofun* 古墳— and in the repertoire of funerary objects. It is also closely connected with the socio-political changes, that happened in the Japanese archipelago during that time.¹³ The process for the emergence of this complex society had already begun during the previous period, the Yayoi Period (900 or 400 BCE – 250 CE), due to the political and economic interactions, that took place in the Yellow Sea through the island of Kyūshū. From the Middle Yayoi until 500 CE, these interactions were frequent and had a major impact on the material culture and the emerging Japanese identity.¹⁴ The interactions that occurred in the Yellow Sea sphere can be subdivided according to their nature as follows: with Han China, Kyūshū had a subordinate relationship based on the tributary system; while with the southern part of Korea, it was a relationship between peers.¹⁵ This can be seen archaeologically from the funerary material culture, that resulted from these interactions. For instance, objects of the comparative artefact repertoires of burials in the southern Korean Peninsula (Proto-Three Kingdoms) and North Kyūshū during the Middle-Late Yayoi Period include: local ceramics (Wajil pottery in Southern Korea; Yayoi Pottery in North Kyūshū); non-local ceramics (Yayoi pottery in Southern Korea; Wajil and Mumun pottery in North Kyūshū); Chinese-style iron arrowheads (in both Southern Korea and North Kyūshū), Han mirrors (both in Southern Korea and North Kyūshū) and Chinese-style horse and carriage fixtures (both in Southern Korean and North Kyūshū).¹⁶ The sharing and exchange of these objects, first with the mainland and then among the Yayoi chieftains, triggered the process of the creation of a stratified and complex society: the person who received one of these objects was considered as belonging to a certain social class directly connected with the elite and power, creating thus a distinction within the various clans of the Japanese territory.¹⁷

The process of Japanese state formation continued throughout the Kofun Period (250 or 300 CE – 710 CE) and is materially visible through the development of a specific mortuary system: the *kofun*

¹² Barnes 2007, 9; Steinhaus/Kaner 2016, 168.

¹³ The word '*kofun*' means 'old mound, ancient tomb' Tsude 1987, 55; Barnes 2007, 9; Steinhaus/Kaner 2016, 168.

¹⁴ Regarding the impact on material culture, see Barnes 2007; Mizoguchi 2013.

¹⁵ Barnes 2007, 32.

¹⁶ Seyock 2003, 72–73; Barnes 2007, 74.

¹⁷ Mizoguchi 2013, 241.

tombs.¹⁸ The development of the size of the tombs coincides with the Yamato clan's rise to power in the Nara Basin (Honshū) (figure 2). Indeed, when the Yamato clan imposed its supremacy and recognition as the ruling clan in the 5th century CE, the size of the *kofun* reached its peak, while in the Late Period the *kofun* became smaller and simpler as the supremacy of this clan was now recognised by the other clans, and because temple-building overtook tomb-building as an elite endeavour.¹⁹ Late Kofun tombs were no longer reserved only for local leaders, but common people also began to build their own tombs, and they spread throughout Japan, including Kyūshū.²⁰

The symbolic objects created during the period of lively exchange with the mainland continued to represent membership of a specific social status and became the characteristic objects of the grave goods typical of the tombs of the most important chieftains.²¹ Therefore, a part of the material culture of the time was made up of objects brought in from a foreign culture into Kyūshū society and absorbed and used as if they were local.

NORTHERN KYŪSHŪ - PENINSULAR RELATIONS DURING THE KOFUN PERIOD

During the Kofun Period, archipelago communities, especially those in Northern Kyūshū and Western Japan, were called into the inter-polity conflicts of the Korean Peninsula (Three Kingdoms Period, 330–668 CE) and came into direct contact with peninsular communities (figure 4).²² There was a real migratory flow from the Peninsula (especially from the Kingdom of Paekche and Kaya) to the islands of the archipelago. Again, along with people, ideas, cultural and technological aspects also entered.²³ Although Northern Kyūshū had been the bridge of contact between the two areas for centuries, during the Kofun Period it was mainly the Nara Basin area that monopolised contacts with China and the Korean

¹⁸ Steinhaus/Kaner 2016, 168.

¹⁹ Tsude 1987, 55.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Barnes 2015, 67–78.

²² For more information about the inter-polity conflicts of the Korean Peninsula and the role of Northern Kyūshū and Western Japan, see Farris 1998; Barnes 2001a, 2007, 2015; Rhee et al. 2007, 2021; Mizoguchi 2013; Steinhaus-Kaner 2016.

In the wars of the 5th century CE among the Korean kingdoms of Koguryo, Silla and Paekche, the Yamato kingdom allied with Paekche against Silla by sending several troops from the coast of North Kyūshū (Brown 1993, 140–144).

²³ Regarding interactions during this period, see Farris 1998; Barnes 2007; Mizoguchi 2013. In his study, Farris (1998) compiles a list of the new cultural elements that appeared in Japan during the Kofun Period including iron-working technology and products (swords, spear points, arrowheads, iron armour and helmets, horse trappings, hoes, spades, sickles); dam-building technology and stamped earth construction techniques; wheel-thrown, high-fired stoneware ceramics; aristocratic gold and silver accoutrements; silk weaving; a complex system of writing; methods of statecraft; a court ranking system; systematic units of measurement; Buddhist religion (Farris 1998, 68–69).

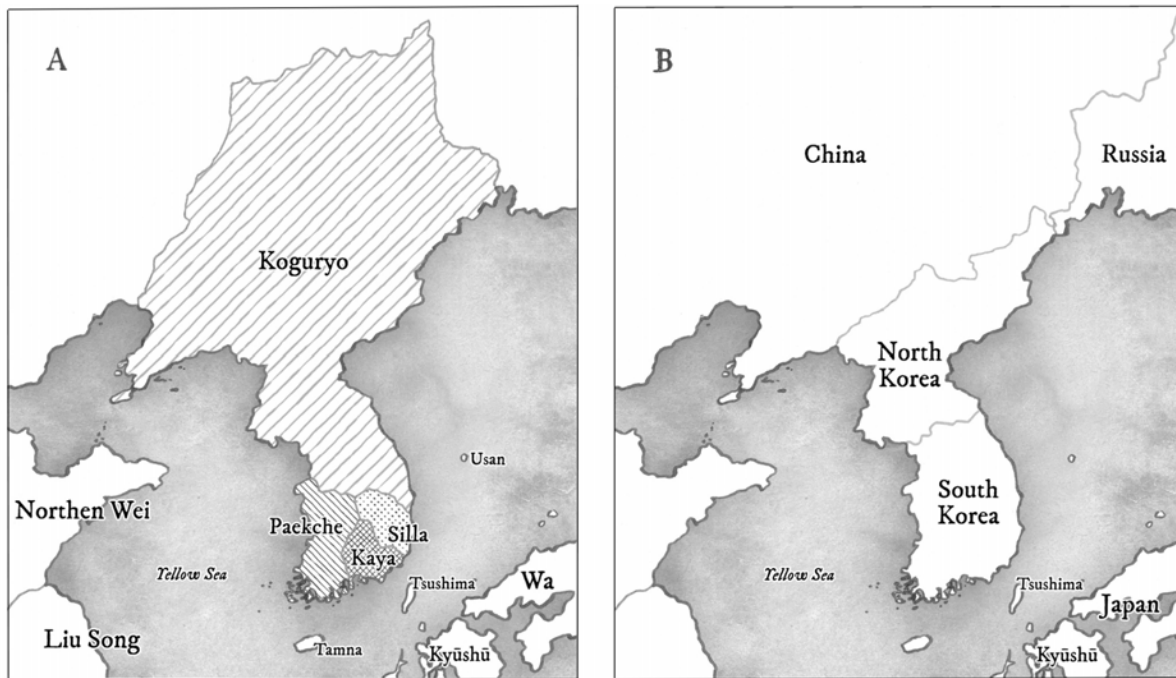


Figure 4. *Map of the Yellow Sea. (A) Ancient view, showing the interaction sphere during the Kofun Period (6.^h century CE): China with the Northern Wei and Liu Song dynasties, Korea during the Three Kingdoms period with the Kingdom of Koguryo, Paekche, Silla and Kaya showing the maximum Koguryo expansion in the 6th century, and Japan (called 'Wa' at that time); (B) Modern view (drawing by Mariapia Di Lecce, architect and illustrator).*

Peninsula: the Yamato elite wanted to reach out to the mainland to obtain the same symbols and means of power.²⁴ However, residential-farming-manufacturing-ritual complexes were activated in Northern Kyūshū by the peninsular migration flow.²⁵ Hakata Bay (is a bay in the north-western part of today's Fukuoka city) became one of the most important hubs for shipping iron from the Peninsula: the competition for bronze and iron to forge symbolic military-type objects (such as horse trappings, armour and helmets) found in the funerary context demonstrates a shift from religious to military power.²⁶ During the 5th century CE, goods and techniques from Japan entered the Korean Peninsula, in Kaya, at the archaeological site of the Jinsan-dong (Goryeong) royal tombs group. Although the quantity of Japanese items found in the Peninsula is not as impressive as that of the artefacts found in Japan with a Korean origin, there is archaeological evidence for a vivid trade during the Kofun Period.²⁷ In conclusion, Kyūshū maintained strong ties with the Peninsula at this stage, continuing a peaceful coexistence between the local population and the peninsular immigrants, who had arrived there because of the unstable situation in their territory.

THE POLITICAL SITUATION OF NORTHERN KYŪSHŪ DURING THE LATE KOFUN PERIOD

According to the later Japanese historical source of *Nihon Shoki* 日

²⁴ Mizoguchi 2013, 293.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ See Rhee et al. 2007; Barnes 2015; Steinhaus/Kaner 2016; Nishitani 2020.

²⁷ Farris 1998, 108.

本書紀 (720 CE), Kyūshū was dominated by three different clans during the Late Kofun Period.²⁸ For the discussion points of this paper, only the main information for the clan of Tsukushi, that is assumed to have ruled the area of the Mezurashizuka tomb, will be outlined. This clan ruled the central area situated between Tsukushi and Kyūshū mountains ranges. It is said that under the reign of Keitai, a clan leader from this area, whose name is thought to be Iwai 磐井, refused the orders of Yamato to send troops and supplies for an expedition against the Korean Kingdom of Silla.²⁹ According to the *Nihon Shoki*, Iwai had made a deal with Silla, thus Yamato's troops were sent to put the Kyūshū rebellion down.³⁰ Although Iwai was defeated, this event shows that in Kyūshū there was a strong clan, that was also very close to the Peninsula. Related to the rebellion of Iwai are the stone sculptures known as *sekijinsekiba* 石人石馬. These are stone sculptures made out of lava tuff depicting men, horses, weapons and armour, and were arranged around the perimeter of the burial ground, replacing the *haniwa* 埴輪 (terracotta clay figures).³¹ The *sekijinsekiba* were considered the symbol of this rebellion and used in the burials of the various members of the Iwai clan and the areas of its influence.³² A theory formulated in 1974 by Oda Fujio states, that after the Iwai revolt *sekijinsekiba* would be replaced by paintings and decorations inside tombs as a manifestation of a local culture, that wanted to differentiate itself from the central Yamato culture.³³

THE MORTUARY SYSTEM OF THE LATE KOFUN PERIOD IN KYŪSHŪ

A new important feature of mortuary architecture entered in Northern Kyūshū during the Late Kofun Period: the *yokoanashiki sekishitsu* 横穴式石室 (corridor-style stone burial chamber, figure 5). The construction of the gallery mortuary chamber within the

28 The northern zone, facing the Genkai Sea and bounded in the centre by the mountain range of Tsukushi, was dominated by the Munaka clan; the central area was under the Tsukushi clan; and the southern side of Kyūshū was occupied by the Kumaso and Hayato peoples (Brown 1993, 149).

29 Brown 1993, 149; Kawano 2023, 78–101. The chapter of the *Nihon Shoki* referred to is 'Book XVII - Keidai Tenno'. For an English translation see Aston 1896.

30 Brown 1993, 149. According to Kawano (2023), Iwai would have moved against Yamato's central power due to local dissatisfaction with the excessive weight of military forces required for the war on the Korean Peninsula. He would have been the spokesman for the situation North Kyūshū was experiencing (Kawano 2023, 78–82).

31 Brown 1993, 149–152; Ikeuchi 2015, 16–18; Nishitani 2020, 130–131; Kawano 2021, 240. The term 'haniwa' refers to terracotta clay figures, that were made for ritual use. They were placed on the perimeter of the *kofun* tomb. Their purpose was twofold: to separate the world of the dead from the world of the living and to protect the dead by ensuring peace for their spirits (Vesco 2021, 27).

32 Ikeuchi 2015, 16–17; Kawano 2023, 78–101.

33 See Oda 1974.

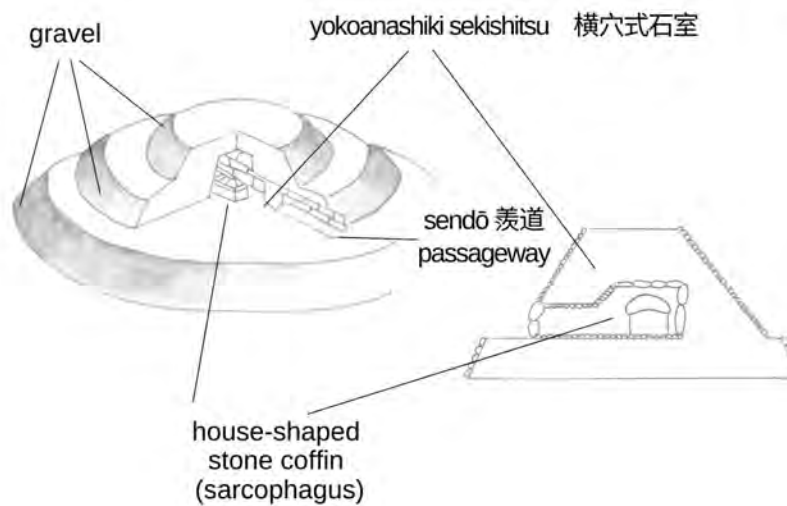


Figure 5.

Structure of a yokoanashiki sekishitsu inside a kofun tomb in the enpun (round) shape. The earthen mound tiers are faced or paved with river cobbles (adapted from Yamakawa 2021, 25).

kofun tomb already existed since the Early Kofun Period.³⁴ It is a cist-like chamber with a rectangular pit-like entrance; the bottom of the entranceway, which is dug into the constructed mound, is level with the mouth of the entrance pit and it could be reopened.³⁵ This typology may have appeared from the hybridisation of the traditional cist chamber and the peninsular tradition of reopening chambers to bury additional deceased. Another possibility is, that it originated from the gallery chamber type developed in the Korean Paekche kingdom.³⁶ Then it evolved between the 4th and 5th centuries CE into the *yokoanashiki sekishitsu*, a tomb with an entrance on one wall of the stone chamber leading outside and with a passageway to the chamber, where the deceased was laid to rest. Therefore, the entrance to the tomb and the various chambers is lateral: narrow corridors leading to large interior spaces, that allow for the burial of multiple people, probably members of the same household (figure 6).³⁷ This is the main layout of decorated tombs in Northern Kyūshū.

In the *yokoanashiki sekishitsu*, the burial rituals were performed at the entrance and inside the tomb during the Late Kofun Period and no longer at the top as in the first two phases of the Period, since the burial entrance is on the side now.³⁸ The entrance to the burial area, no longer sealed, gave the opportunity to reopen the tomb.³⁹ These ceremonies likely have had a different function from the first rites in honour of the deceased, since, starting from the Late Kofun, the shape of the tombs was no longer a symbol-

³⁴ Mizoguchi 2013, 256–258; Barnes 2015, 355–356.

³⁵ Mizoguchi 2013, 256.

³⁶ Mizoguchi 2013, 256–258; Barnes 2015, 355–356.

³⁷ Steinhaus/Kaner 2016, 169.

³⁸ Mizoguchi 2013, 309.

³⁹ Steinhaus/Kaner 2016, 169.

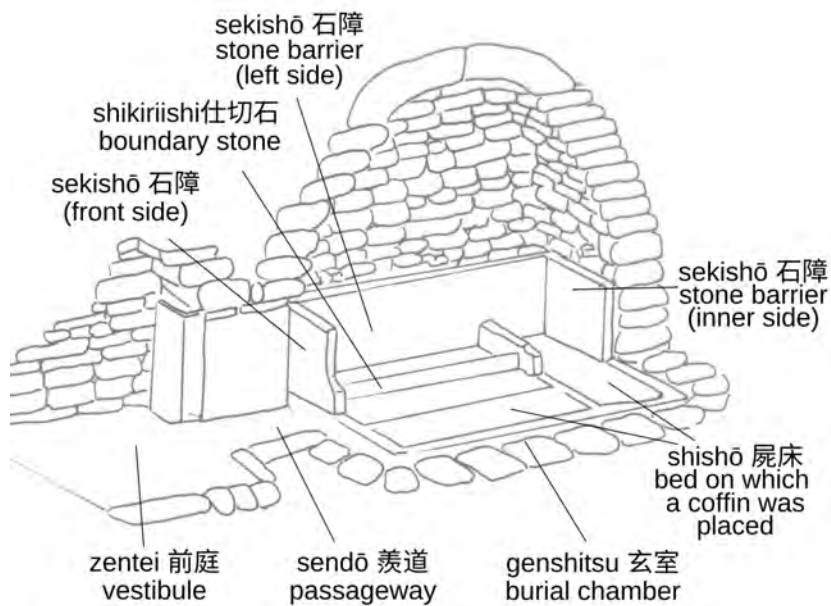


Figure 6.

Interior layout of a yokoanashiki sekishitsu with sekishō (adapted from Yanagisawa 2022, figure 2, 16).

microcosm of the values represented by the buried person and a place for offerings and prayers, but became "the monumental indicator of the status of the deceased".⁴⁰ Moreover, "not only the members of a sub-lineage-scale grouping were buried, but also individuals who had done and achieved certain things in their lifetime [...]".⁴¹

It also seems that in the *sōshoku kofun* of Kyūshū, there was a specific burial practice that can be related to the presence of the depicted murals. In fact, it is believed the deceased was 'shown' to the community inside the burial chamber.⁴² It is assumed, that the original use of decorated *kofun* was to allow the mourner and the deceased to meet in the front room through the mural.⁴³ Wada affirms in that time it is believed, that the deceased, or its soul, was free to move within this space, so that they could interact with the motifs reproduced on the walls and observe the decorations, which were familiar and easy to decode.⁴⁴ The deceased, who was shown to third parties, had to be contained so that they did not venture out of the house of the dead.⁴⁵ For this reason, there are certain symbols — such as the *chokkomon* 直弧文 (straight line and arc

⁴⁰ Mizoguchi 2013, 309.

⁴¹ Ibid., 299.

⁴² According to Kawano, the deceased was placed along the wall at the back, thus visible from the entrance, because the perspective allowed one to see the burial chamber and the deceased (placed in a sarcophagus, coffin or lying in the *shishō*) directly as one entered the tomb. Still, according to the author, the decorations on the walls would have had the meaning of 'decorating and embellishing' the deceased, and all decorated tombs in themselves were meant to stage this representation for the living, who would return to the tombs for the burials of the other members of the lineage (Kawano 2023, 104–114).

⁴³ Kawano 2021, 241.

⁴⁴ Wada 2009, 264.

⁴⁵ Kawano 2021, 244.

pattern) — in decorated tombs, that were believed to be talismans to contain the soul of the deceased.⁴⁶

Lastly, the related symbolism of the material culture created through interactions in the Yellow Sea, that began from the Middle Yayoi, was manifested in the grave goods, which, in some cases, have unique local characteristics. The main grave goods of the Late Kofun are briefly illustrated in table 2 with a focus on the specificities found on the island of Kyūshū.

THE SŌSHOKU KOFUN OF NORTHERN KYŪSHŪ

The term *sōshoku kofun* refers to those *kofun* with decorative motifs in relief, engraved and painted on the inner and/or outer surface of the sarcophagus, on the surface of the *sekishō* 石障, on the inner and/or outer walls of the stone burial chamber.⁴⁷ The *sōshoku kofun* are normally divided into four types depending on where the decorations were placed and made, as shown in table 3.⁴⁸

The origin of *sōshoku kofun* is still unknown. One theory identifies the origin of the phenomenon in the influence from the mainland and, in particular, with the Korean kingdom of Koguryo. The contact with the culture of decorated tombs of this kingdom would have activated a kind of stimulus to emulate them and absorb some symbolic elements connected with the conception of the afterlife.⁴⁹ The other main theory, also outlined in the previous section, is the local development of a new artistic phenomenon (first with *sekijinsekiba*, later with decorations in tombs) resulting from a materialisation of the local ideology, that opposed the central power with the Iwai revolt.⁵⁰

In all cases, *sōshoku kofun* were probably related to the burial of people of a specific social status or members of a specific powerful family line.⁵¹ This is so, because the making of the paintings required a specific labour force. According to Barnes, the construction of the tomb was in itself perceived as a sufficient

⁴⁶ The term '*chokkomon*' refers to patterns of straight lines and arcs. It is believed that this motif was used in the funerary context as it was intended to protect the soul of the deceased and is also found drawn on *haniwa* clay figurines (Shiraishi 1999, 76). However, Barnes argues that this symbol, which is also found on various objects of material culture not always related to the funerary context, had the meaning of "either to help inflict death or to ward off death from its user" (Barnes 2003, 64).

⁴⁷ The term '*sekishō*' refers to the surfaces of the walls of the burial chamber, that were covered with stone slabs in some specific graves (Shiraishi 1993, 11).

⁴⁸ Professor Y. Kobayashi was the first to suggest this division in the 1960s, and is still the most commonly used division to categorise the different types of decorated tombs (see Kobayashi 1961; Shiraishi 1993, 11–12; Ikeuchi 2015, 12–13).

⁴⁹ Shiraishi 1993, 15; 1999, 74, 86.

⁵⁰ According to Yanagisawa, the decorated tombs could be a symbol of the federation of clans, that supported Iwai against Yamato (Yanagisawa 2022, 54–55).

⁵¹ Ōtsuka 2014, 28.

LATE KOFUN PERIOD GRAVE GOODS	MAIN CHARACTERISTICS
Weapons and equipment for horse harnesses	<p>In the Late Kofun, unlike in the early stages, weapons were no longer placed in large numbers in mounds.¹ From the Middle Yayoi onwards, armour, arrowheads, equipment for harnessing horses, and especially swords, were considered among the most significant symbolic objects because they were connected with the symbolism of identity affiliation born with peer relationships. Weapons as a symbolic object did not disappear entirely from the Late Kofun grave goods: the different lengths and features on the handles of swords were typical indicators of minor differences in status.² The horse harnesses found in Late Kofun burials, and also in <i>sōshoku kofun</i> such as the tomb of Ōzuka, do not differ much from the same objects of the earlier phases and were probably imported or made on Korean models.³ By the Middle Kofun, it was already common to breed and ride horses and gilded bronze trappings typical of the later phase began to be introduced from Korea.⁴</p> <p>¹ Mizoguchi 2013, 308. ² Ibid., 309. ³ Steinhaus/Kaner 2016, 219. ⁴ Ibid, 203.</p>
Bronze mirrors	<p>The bronze mirror has long been a symbolic object representing the recognition and affiliation to a particular political status of a specific elite in charge of relations with the Chinese court during the Yayoi Period. Mirrors were given by the Han court to regional Kyūshū chiefs to show and seal their alliance relationship.¹ The status symbolised by the mirror was also intrinsic to Yayoi and Kofun society: it was in fact used by Japanese society as a symbol of alliance with the future dominant Yamato clan in the transitional period between the Yayoi and Early/Middle Kofun Periods.² Indeed, those who obtained a bronze mirror from the Han court were also recognised by Yayoi society as members of the elite. In several graves of the first two Kofun phases, Chinese-made mirrors can be found dated even 200 years before the burial in question, symbolising that mirrors were kept for generations before being buried.³ From the Middle Kofun onwards, there was then an increase in the local production of Japanese mirrors, but they were less well cared for and smaller than the Chinese originals.⁴ While during Late Kofun there was also a return to the production of larger mirrors.⁵ It is believed that the mirrors were placed inside the burial as they were considered magical objects, probably a Taoist belief.⁶</p> <p>¹ Barnes 2007. ² Kidder 1964, 142. ³ Steinhaus/Kaner 2016, 185. ⁴ Steinhaus/Kaner 2016, 185; Barnes 2015, 329. ⁵ Steinhaus/Kaner 2016, 240. ⁶ Steinhaus/Kaner 2016, 185; Kidder 1964, 142.</p>
Bead accessories and jewellery	<p>From the 3rd century CE onwards, the leaders of the rising society began to be buried together with symbolic and prestige objects such as beaded bracelets of various shapes and sizes, and <i>magatama</i> (comma-shaped) ornaments.¹ These bracelets were normally made of green jasper or green tuff, while the beads could be jade (especially <i>magatama</i> beads), jasper (especially cylindrical beads), and glass (small beads).² In several <i>kofun</i> these accessories were found in large numbers, far beyond those required for simple personal adornment, probably because they were placed in ritual form.³ As with other prestige objects, these accessories also changed according to the social developments of the Kofun period in terms of the symbolic meaning they represented. In the Middle Kofun many of the beaded objects lost their political significance and were no longer direct symbols of status.⁴ They were partly replaced by weapons as the main symbolic object, representing the change in the basis of the sovereign's legitimacy: from ritual in the 4th century to military force in the 5th century.⁵ In addition, many objects previously made of stone and jade were now replaced by talc, a material that was more readily available, softer and easier to carve.⁶ Beads of different shapes (round and cylindrical) and <i>magatama</i> have also been found in several <i>sōshoku kofun</i> in Northern Kyūshū.⁷ For example, in the decorated <i>kofun</i> of Ōzuka rare swamp oak beads, clay beads with a small depression and cylindrical beads were found.⁸</p> <p>¹ Barnes 2001b. ² Ibid. ³ Ibid. ⁴ Ibid., 3. ⁵ Ibid., 2. ⁶ Ibid.; Steinhaus/Kaner 2016. ⁷ Data obtained from the database personally compiled on the basis of data provided by Dr Kawano of the Kyūshū Museum by private correspondence on 09 July 2021. ⁸ Steinhaus/Kaner 2016, 240</p>
Pottery	<p>Imported through a massive migratory flow from the Korean peninsula to the coasts of North Kyūshū between the Early and Middle Kofun, the typical pottery used in the Late Kofun funerary context mainly comprises Sue pottery.¹ It is pottery made on a potter's wheel and fired under reduced conditions in kilns that are completely or partially underground.² In addition to pots, the pottery includes perforated and unperforated pedestal dishes, often including lids, also perforated and unperforated.³ They were usually placed near the individual bodies buried in the burial chamber.⁴ Food remains, such as fish bones, have been found inside some Sue vases and dishes, indicating that they were used as containers for food and drink for the deceased to consume in the afterlife.⁵</p> <p>¹ Mizoguchi 2013, 242. ² Steinhaus/Kaner 2016, 222. ³ Steinhaus/Kaner 2016, 230. ⁴ Mizoguchi 2013, 305. ⁵ Mizoguchi 2013; Kawano 2023.</p>

Table 2.
The main grave goods of the Late Kofun Period (created by author).

TYOLOGY	CHRONOLOGY	MAIN CHARACTERISTICS	MAIN MOTIFS
sekkan-kei 石棺系	end of the 4 th c. CE-5 th c. CE	engraved or relief decorations on the stone sarcophagi	<i>chokkomon</i> circle - concentric circle armour (quiver, sword)
sekishō-kei 石障系	end of the 4 th c. CE-5 th c. CE	engraved or relief decorations on the stone barrier	<i>chokkomon</i> circle - concentric circle armour (quiver, sword)
hekiga-kei 壁画系	6 th c. CE - 7 th c. CE	decorations were directly painted or scratched on the walls of the stone burial chamber	geometric patterns armour (quiver, sword, shield) human figure, boats, animals narrative scenes
yokoana-kei 横穴系	6 th c. CE - 7 th c. CE	decorations were engraved on the outer stone walls near the entrance of the yokoana-style tombs	geometric patterns armour (quiver, sword, shield) human figure, boats, animals

Table 3.

Classification of the different sōshoku kofun with the main characteristics (created by author).

symbol of belonging to a certain identity affiliation and, therefore, the paintings were not intended to promote the status of the deceased.⁵²

The motifs depicted can be divided as seen in table 4.⁵³ The tombs with continental motifs are in a very low number compared to other representations.

THE DECORATED TOMB OF MEZURASHIZUKA

The tomb of Mezurashizuka is located in present-day Fukuoka Prefecture, within the area of the city of Ukiha. It was discovered in 1950 during construction works. It has an *enpun* (round) 円墳 shape and the internal structure is arranged as *yokoanashiki sekishitsu* (figure 7). It is assumed to date back to the second half of the 6th century CE. The decorations are in the *hekiga-kei* typology (painting) and the colours used are red and blue. Nowadays, only the painting on the front wall of the burial

⁵² Barnes 1992, 7.

⁵³ The data in the table are an elaboration of data acquired from Shinoto's (2015) database, from the Kyūshū Museum and from an observation of the photos of the tombs available to me. Motifs marked in Shinoto's (2015) database, that were unclear in the photos or could not be obtained, have been omitted from this analysis. I reserve the right in a future analysis, in which it will be possible to retrieve material directly from primary sources, to revise the data presented here.

MAIN CATEGORY	SUBCATEGORIES	N. OF SŌSHOKU KOFUN
Mainland motifs		7
Symbolic motifs	<i>chokkomon</i> 直弧文 (straight line and arc pattern); <i>sōkyakurinjōmon</i> 双脚輪状文 (cogwheel shaped circle with two ribbons like short projections); <i>warabitemon</i> 蕨手文 (leaf - plan pattern)	22
Animals	horse; other quadruped; bird; fish	26
Human figure	with weapons; with horse; with boat; simple	38
Boat	simple gondola-shaped boat; boat with two separate elements; boat with mast and sail	43
War-items patterns	quiver (<i>yugi</i> 鞞); sword; shield	79
Geometric motifs	circle; concentric circle; triangle	177

Table 4.

Division of the decorative motifs identified within the sōshoku kofun of Kyūshū and the amount of their presence within the repertoire (created by author).

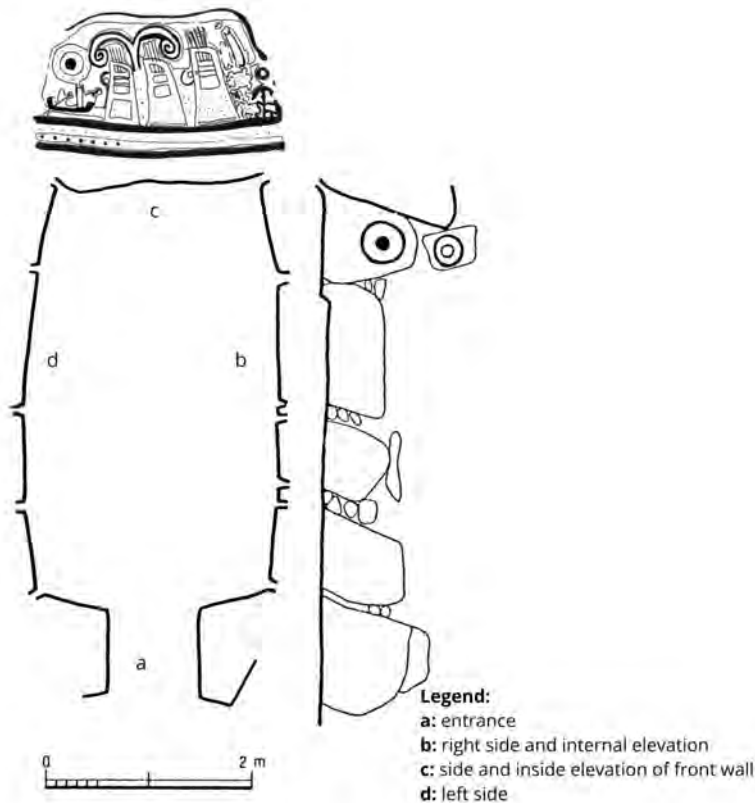


Figure 7.

Plan and interior elevation of the Mezurashizuka tomb (adapted from Yanagisawa 2022, figure 2, 128)

chamber has remained.

DESCRIPTION OF ICONOGRAPHY

Looking at figure 8, the main iconography of the depicted scene can be subdivided and briefly described as shown in table 5.

DESCRIPTION OF ICONOLOGY

The painting depicted in the tomb of Mezurashizuka is considered to be a reproduction of the deceased's journey from the world of the living to the afterlife.⁵⁴ This would be indicated by several symbolic elements present within the scene. The scene can be divided by the three quivers into:

- **left:** world of the living represented by the concentric circle, which would symbolise the sun, and the presence of the perching bird.⁵⁵ This element is a probable reference to the three-legged crow, that, in Chinese tradition, represents the sun.⁵⁶

- **right:** world of the afterlife represented by toads, that symbolise the moon in continental culture and are, therefore, associated with the world of the dead.⁵⁷ In fact, since ancient times, in Chinese tradition the toad is linked to the moon and is depicted in wall paintings in the Koguryo tradition such as the Deokheung-ri tomb (5th century CE) and Ssangyeongchong tomb (end of 5th century CE).⁵⁸ Also, the other concentric circle (without dots) has been traced back to the depiction of the moon.

There are also elements of the Japanese tradition of that time used to protect the deceased from evil forces, such as: the quiver (4), the *warabitemon* (leaf - fern frond pattern) (3), which is thought to be associated with a talisman, as it would represent the life force of the first ferns and the desire for rebirth, and the concentric circle (7).⁵⁹ Another symbolic element is the boat: according to Shiraishi, Northern Kyūshū society would have absorbed a continental belief, that saw the other world in a very

54 Regarding the connection between the painting and the afterlife, see Harunari 1999; Shiraishi 1999; Ōtsuka 2014. Some scholars, e.g. Tatsumi 2011, claim, that this is a depiction of the 'yomi' (the world of Hades) described in the *Nihon shoki* and *Kojiki* books.

55 In the tradition of the Kyūshū decorated tombs, the circle and the concentric circle have often been connected with the reproduction of the mirror as well. The mirror is a prestige object that originated in the context of interactions between Northern Kyūshū and Han China during the Middle Yayoi Period. It is also a symbol of protection of the deceased (Shiraishi 1999, 76).

56 Harunari 1999, 226; Ōtsuka 2014, 116, 121; Shinoto 2015, 7.

An example of the three-legged crow with a peacock crest (symbolising the sun) is visible in the ceiling mural of the burial chamber of the Ssangyeongchong tomb (Koguryo Kingdom, figure 9).

57 Harunari 1999, 226; Shiraishi 1999, 86.

An example of the toad (symbolising the moon) can be found in the ceiling mural of the burial chamber of the Ssangyeongchong tomb (Koguryo Kingdom, figure 9).

58 Harunari 1999, 226; Shiraishi 1999, 86; Ōtsuka 2014, 119; Nishitani 2020, 39.

59 Shiraishi 1999, 79; Kawano 2021, 243.

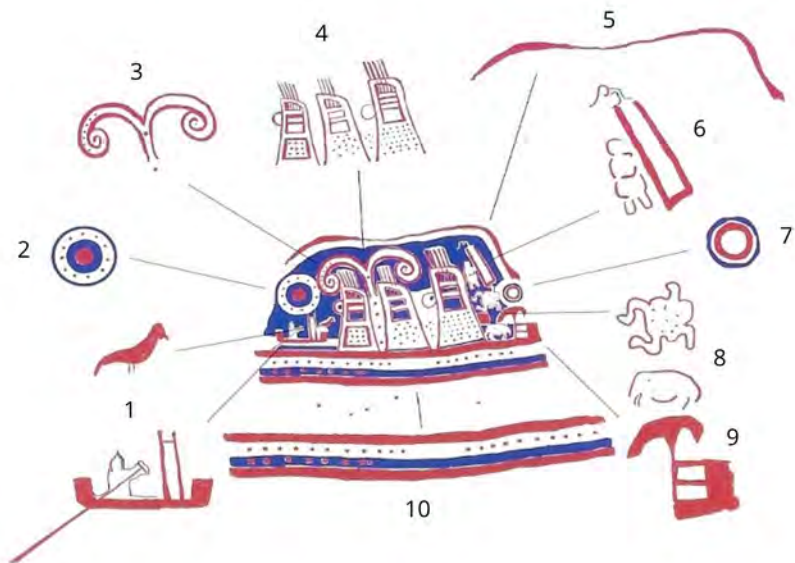


Figure 8.
The painting on the front wall of the burial chamber of the Mezurashizuka tomb (image reproduced in the Mezurashizuka Kofun Museum, Ukiha).

NUMBER	ICONOGRAPHY	NOTES
1	boat with an oarsman on board and a bird perched on the prow	the boat reproduced here is of the so-called 'gondola' style, a style of boat already depicted in other elements of prehistoric Japanese art and also reproduced in the form of a <i>haniwa</i> . ¹ The human figure is made in a very stylised style, typical of almost the entire tradition of <i>sōshoku kofun</i> , and does not present distinctive features such as helmets or armour. Between the oarsman and the bird, which is thought to be a crow or a seagull, there is a rectangular figure shape, perhaps a coffin. ² <small>¹ E.g. the boat-shaped <i>haniwa</i> from Takarazuka tomb, Mie Prefecture (5th CE). ² Ōtsuka 2014, 118.</small>
2	concentric circle with dots	
3	<i>warabitemon</i>	'fern frond', a botanical element typical of Japanese symbolism, here with two spiral ends and dots inside
4	<i>yugi</i> (quiver)	three large <i>yugi</i> stand in the centre of the painting, separating figure (1) from the rest of the scene. Inside the <i>yugi</i> are arrows. Between the first and the central <i>yugi</i> , the (3) <i>warabitemon</i> motif is painted.
5	line delimiting the upper part of the painting	
6	second human figure	the figure appears to be wearing balloon trousers and is holding or carrying a large rectangular object
7	concentric circle without dots	
8	two toads	one reproduced seen from above and the other frontally
9	a bird perched on a rectangular-shaped figure	
10	thick red and blue lines with dots	

Table 5.
Iconographic description of the painting in the Mezurashizuka tomb (created by author).



Figure 9.
 Replica of the painting of
 "Lotus flower and the sun
 and moon",
 Ssangyeongchong tomb,
 Koguryo Kingdom (courtesy
 of the National Museum of
 Korea).

distant place beyond the sea, accessed by sailing in a boat.⁶⁰ The thick lines below the scene may represent the ground or the sea, while the thicker points may be stars — another element probably influenced by the paintings of the Koguryo tombs — thus representing the night and a vast ocean, beyond which lies the other world.⁶¹ A personal hypothesis is that the star dots were used not only to symbolise the night but also as orientation points for navigation, which can be found in other ancient cultures as well.

A MATTER OF IDENTITY: LOCAL, IMPORTED OR HYBRID?

PENINSULAR INFLUENCE ON STYLE, ICONOGRAPHY, AND ICONOLOGY

The studies and analyses proposed here show how the Mezurashizuka tomb painting is composed of both local and 'foreign' elements perfectly intertwined in creating a narrative scene. This tomb is considered among the tombs with explicitly continental subjects and, therefore, had a direct influence on the peninsular tradition. However, it is important to understand to what extent we can identify peninsular influence on the style, the iconography, and the iconology. In the following, I have attempted to report the possible iconological significance based on current studies and critically evaluate the style used as an indicator of a possible cultural practice.

The first point of difference concerns the style of painting in the Mezurashizuka tomb, which is entirely different from the style used in the paintings of the tombs on the Peninsula compared to

⁶⁰ Shiraishi 1999, 85.

⁶¹ These 'star-dots' were found, for example, in the Koguryo tomb of Jinpa-ri Tomb n. 4. For more information on studies of constellation representations in decorated tombs of the Koguryo kingdom and Nord Kyūshū, refer to Hirai 2018; Shiraishi 1999, 85.

the locally known style. Analysing the reproductions of the boat on Yayoi Period pottery, *dōtaku* ritual bells and vase-shaped *haniwa*, it appears that the style and iconography is very similar.⁶² Indeed, the iconography of the boat with perching birds was also found on a *haniwa* from two centuries before the reproduction of the Mezurashizuka tomb painting at Higashi Tonozuka, Tenri city (Honshū), dating to the 4th century CE (figure 10). This indicates that the symbolic image reproduced in this *sōshoku* kofun was not used for the first time but would recall in style and subject matter a pre-existing tradition. Moreover, this iconography is also reproduced in the tomb of Torifunnezuka (6th c. CE), while in the tomb of Haru (6th c. CE) a sailing scene is reproduced as well, but without the perching bird. Both paintings are realised in the same style of Mezurashizuka and are positioned very close to each other in Ukiha area.

Therefore, a significant point is that the peninsular style was not adopted. In fact, there was a strong flow of immigrants from Korea during the Kofun Period, who had brought technology, cultural and partly artistic aspects to the island. In addition, men were sent from Northern Kyūshū to the Peninsula territories for military and trade purposes. Therefore, just as certain Peninsular elements had been absorbed into the artistic culture of Northern Kyūshū, the mainland style of realisation could also have entered. Artisans and commissioners make a choice among all the different styles they can use.⁶³ Thus, a conscious choice may have been made to maintain a familiarity with the local and pre-existing artistic expression of the area. Since style can transmit social and personal identity and social identity is often archaeologically identified through a particular material culture, also decorated tombs in Kyūshū may aimed to show a specific identity affiliation.⁶⁴

The peninsular influence is identified in some of the used iconography and iconology, but it is not as predominant as it might seem at first reading of the image. According to several studies, the depicted bird is a crow.⁶⁵ The crow itself is considered to be a symbolic animal already present in the Japanese society of that time.⁶⁶ It was considered to be a bird, that returns to the mountain in the evening, while its black plumage was associated with the image of the coming of night, thus creating an interrelation with the movement of the sun from day to night.⁶⁷

62 For more information on the development of the subject of the boat in prehistoric and protohistoric Japanese art and material culture, see Zancan 2022.

63 Sackett 1977, 370–371.

64 Regarding the correlation between material culture and identity affiliation, see Wobst 1977; Wiessner 1983; Spears 2011.

65 See Harunari 1999; Shiraishi 1999; Ōtsuka 2014.

66 Harunari 1999, 228.

67 Ibid.



Figure 10.
 Reproduction of the engraving of boat 1 and 2 of the Higashi Tonozuka haniwa vase depicting a boat with a perching bird (after the original found in Nakayama-cho, Tenri city, Nara prefecture).

Having already had this image of the crow, it was therefore also possible to absorb the meaning of 'sun' from Chinese and Korean symbolism.⁶⁸ Nonetheless, the bird is depicted with two legs in this specific painting, so it could also be another type of bird, such as the seagull, which was often used for navigational guidance. Either way, the boat-bird composition was already known in the archipelago and used in a funerary context not only in the Kyūshū area. The fact that it has been reproduced in the form of a painting, reveals the desire to convey an existing concept in another artistic form. It is not clear yet, however, whether it is an image born in the Japanese archipelago or obtained during the centuries of interaction with the continent.

Some archaeological discoveries have shown that in the Kofun Period tradition the boat was used to transport the body and the soul of the chieftain: there were rituals, in which the body was towed on a ritual boat in full size to the entrance of the tomb.⁶⁹ A 'mourning boat' is also mentioned in documents of the Sui dynasty (581–618 CE) in reference to Japanese funerary practices of the Kofun Period.⁷⁰ Another relevant fact is, that, according to Wada, the ritual of carrying the deceased to the grave in a boat was reserved only for clan chiefs.⁷¹ It is probable, therefore, that in the *sōshoku kofun*, in which the boat has been reproduced, a local clan chief was buried or, as Mizoguchi expounds, someone who had distinguished himself in life through exploits of considerable value, as was customary in Late Kofun.⁷² According to Shiraishi, the presence of the subject of the boat in the *sōshoku kofun* is linked to the continental belief that the boat was the means of transport for the deceased to reach the afterlife.⁷³ The burial chamber would not be the end point but the intermediate route to the other world. The Mezurashizuka tomb painting can be placed

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ In 2006, a ritual boat with symbolic motifs, such as the *chokkomon* carved in the hull and with red pigment, was found in the moat of the Suyama *kofun* 粟山古墳 (Nara, late 4th - early 5th centuries CE, Wada 2009, 259, 261).

⁷⁰ Ibid., 260.

⁷¹ Wada 2009, 259–260.

⁷² Mizoguchi 2013, 299.

⁷³ Shiraishi 1999, 74, 86.

in this context of the journey of the deceased, in which there are also other elements that recall the protection of the dead, such as the *warabitemon* motif, the three quivers and the concentric circle.

In conclusion, the answer to the question “to what extent we can identify peninsular influence on the style, the iconography, and iconology”, can be summarised as follows:

1. The style is purely local and was preferred to the peninsular one, probably to convey socio-cultural information, that the local style already had.

2. The mainland iconography and iconology are only identified in the figure of the toad representing the moon. By association, the bird has been linked to the crow-sun (as there is also a concentric circle above it), but it is uncertain whether it could be a crow and not another bird connected with navigation.

3. Although some studies believe that the depicted scene derives from a peninsular conception of the afterlife, this cannot be verified. In fact, symbolism with the boat and the world of the afterlife already existed locally in Kofun Period Japan, which is demonstrated by the discovery at the Suyama site.

AN INTERTWINED PAINTING

Nevertheless, the previous analysis does not explain why we find two intertwined artistic and cultural traditions in the painting. For a possible answer, we need to reconsider the archaeological context of Northern Kyūshū.

The southern Korean Peninsula and Kyūshū were in peer polity interactions for a long time engaged, which resulted in a homogeneous material culture (visible in the grave-goods) and in a sort of competitive emulation (visible from the erection of giant mounds). The *sōshoku kofun* are very particular tombs, which appeared first only in Kyūshū. The decorated tombs had for a long time been a tradition of the Chinese and Korean royal tombs.⁷⁴ Therefore, the presence of these mounds in the Peninsula were already perceived by the common people as a symbol of a specific status (royal status) transmitted from China. Because of the consistent lack of the main pictorial subjects in the Peninsula decorated tombs (e.g., animals of the four directions and the representation of nobility), many scholars have interpreted the Kyūshū tombs as a local development with some sporadic continental influence. Barnes claims that one of the stages of the peer polity interactions between southern Korea and Kyūshū happened at the end of the Middle Kofun Period (end of the 4th-beginning of the 5th centuries CE) “when craft technologies in the Yamato region are revolutionized by Paekche and Kaya

74 Regarding the Korean royal tombs, see Kim 1986; Nelson 1993; Portal 2000.

immigrants”, and during the Late Kofun Period with the adoption of Buddhism from Paekche.⁷⁵ In addition, a feature of homogeneous material culture was shared based on the nature of this interaction, which is identified in the *yokoakashiki sekishitsu*. As Renfrew states, the erection of particular buildings and the transmission of innovations are two elements of the peer polity interaction connected to changes in the social-system.⁷⁶ Therefore, the appearance of decorated tombs (particular building) and the round-shaped mounds with the stone passageway (innovation) of the Kyūshū tombs represent the ‘competitive emulation’, of which changes are often materialised into particular material culture. It is known, that there was the clan of Iwai in Northern Kyūshū, who was perceived as high-ranking and often in charge of Peninsular realities. As the decorated tombs of the Peninsula were royal tombs, and Kyūshū and the southern Peninsula had relations among the same political-status peers, this very powerful clan (and the clans/families close to it) would have shown its status and identity affiliation also through a very particular mound on the basis of the peer influence: the decorated tomb. Symbols, as it was for style, can convey and transmit specific identity information.⁷⁷ In order to self-identify a collective identity, the group usually uses a sort of ‘symbolic’ demarcation in its material culture, which can also be materialised.⁷⁸ In this case, again, the decorated tomb is a symbol of materialisation of an identity affiliation of a specific group.

No less important is it to include the various examples of hybridised material culture found in Northern Kyūshū since the Jōmon and Yayoi Periods (table 1) and the nature of the symbolic objects in the Late Kofun grave goods repertoire (table 2) in the discussion. What can be identified in the material culture of Kyūshū in the centuries before the decorated tombs is, that, instead of replacing the previous material culture with the ‘foreign’ one, Kyūshū people deliberately decided to create a new material culture with characteristics of both, without destroying the link to the local tradition entirely.⁷⁹

To answer the second question “how to explain the presence of both, local and Peninsular subjects, in the Mezurashizuka's tomb painting”, it is possible to identify a materialisation of the society of the time in this tomb, that is to say, a hybrid society, that wanted to differentiate itself from the central power. I refer to it as ‘hybrid’ following Stockhammer’s definition because the new

75 Barnes 2007, 36.

76 Renfrew 1986, 8.

77 Wiessner 1983, 256–258.

78 DeMarrais et al. 1996, 16–17; Shelach 2009, 77.

79 Mizoguchi 2013, 68.

material culture (the *sōshoku kofun*) combines the familiar (iconography and style) with the foreign element (decorations).⁸⁰ This society behind the decorated tombs emerged from a long-lasting process, in which an entanglement of social practices and meanings generated by the meeting of two cultures took place, leading to the creation of a transcultural object/art form, that combines the familiar with the unfamiliar.⁸¹ A new material entity, in which choices are made about what to include and exclude from the previous tradition and the external. Once assimilated, these new hybrid identities — or entangled — are integrated and assumed by their users to be normative, as it has already happened with the material culture of Kyūshū centuries before.⁸²

CONCLUSION

Considering that images in non-literary societies are channels for sending information about the society and culture of the time, what information does the Mezurashizuka tomb painting convey to us?

From the data and information discussed in this paper, it is possible to summarise as follows:

1. The related society saw itself as different from the society of the central power. We know from later historical sources, that the political situation in Kyūshū was anything but stable and at odds with the central power. The decorated tombs may have appeared as a symbol of 'emulative competition' with the decorated tombs on the continent and as a materialisation of the ideology of the area. The symbolism of the decorated tombs as an 'elite symbol' was thus absorbed into the sphere of peer polity interaction.

2. The society behind decorated tombs had not entirely identified with the Peninsular culture either. This is because the recognised continental iconography and iconology is reduced to a single figurative subject (toad-moon) and three other hypothetical subjects (crow-sun, idea of the sea voyage to the afterlife, star-dots). Furthermore, the decision to use the pre-existing artistic style of Northern Kyūshū denotes that a conscious choice was made and that continuity with a local element was desired.

3. The Mezurashizuka tomb painting represents a materialisation of the society of the time that has been defined as 'hybrid' in this paper. This is because the archaeological context of Kyūshū reveals several examples of hybridisation in the artistic form, material culture, grave goods, and society in the area for

⁸⁰ Stockhammer 2012, 50. Regarding the concept of 'hybrid' in ancient material culture, see Voskos/Knapp 2008; Ekengren 2009; Stockhammer 2012; Verstegen 2012; Deagan 2013.

⁸¹ Stockhammer 2012, 50.

⁸² Deagan 2013, 270.

centuries. Therefore, as the local society had been used to interacting with a hybrid material culture for centuries, it is not unusual to find both, local and peninsular elements, in a context, such as funerary art, perfectly intertwined.

In conclusion, the Mezurashizuka tomb painting is an excellent example of the materialisation of the society of the Late Kofun area: a culture with elements of peninsular origin derived from centuries of interactions and co-existence and, on the other hand, a local culture that wanted to differentiate itself from the central power that was establishing itself in the Nara Basin (Honshū).

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Social and Religious Differences in the Rural Village of Gózquez (San Martín de la Vega, Madrid, Spain)

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the social and religious differences shift of Visigothic Spain through the case study of Gózquez. The site is a village built at the end of the 6th century during the period of territorial reorganisation by the local aristocracy. Nonetheless, during the 8th century there was a progressive Islamisation, which led to new ceramic forms and a change in the funeral rite. In Gózquez and its archaeological materiality, it is possible to reflect on the wider social dynamics and show the succession of changes between the Visigothic and Islamic periods.

INTRODUCTION

In the past, the studies focusing on rural settlements in the region of Madrid have been neglected within the mosaic of early medieval landscapes. Until recently, archaeologists were attentive to studying cemeteries with little attention given to the nearby Early Medieval settlements. In this context, the outcome of the study of the village of Gózquez with a simple typological study of the materials, is not enough to determine the diachronic changes in this site. Therefore, stratigraphic study is essential to capturing the differences between the 6th and 8th centuries.¹ This article aims to present a social study of the Early Medieval Period through the specific case of Gózquez, analysing the two most significant spaces of the town together: the domestic area and the cemetery.

This paper will argue that the analysis of archaeological materiality can determine the social differences in the territory and, therefore, explore the hierarchical structure of the Early Medieval society.² Contextualised cemeteries, together with the study of the town, can determine the social aspect. Reflecting on the hierarchy of Early Medieval society is possible with the

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► [Profile page](#)

¹ Gutiérrez Lloret 2007; Amorós Ruiz 2015; Berrica 2020.

² Azkarate Garai-Olaun/García Camino 2012; Francovich/Hodges 2003; Olmo Enciso 2015; Sánchez Pardo 2014.

quantitative analysis (*how many tombs have grave goods*) and qualitative (*what kind of grave goods*) of the tombs. The diachronic study of the habitat zone helps to determine the presence and quantity of prestige elements. However, when the tombs no longer present grave goods, a social change from the 7th century onwards, can other ways be found to understand the hierarchy within the village? For example, can the combined analysis of architectural features and burial rituals help us in this type of analysis? To answer these questions, I will examine the historical background of the site at the time of the Early Medieval period, and how archaeology has traditionally handled its materials. It will be then illustrated how the examination of the materiality linked to both the domestic and funerary areas allow a better understanding of the socio-cultural structure of Gózquez. Through the methodological study that is proposed in this article I want to highlight the complexity and hierarchy of the rural areas of the Iberian central peninsula.³

THE HISTORICAL-ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

Cemeteries excavated as isolated sites without reference to nearby settlements have drawn particular attention in studies on rural areas of the last century. Funerary studies in the 20th century considered the early Medieval cemeteries as belonging to Germanic groups who reached the Iberian Peninsula. It was considered by various historians and archaeologists as a privileged place for the settlement of the Visigoths, since it was located near the capital, Toledo.⁴ Germanic grave goods were classified as the identifiers of new Germanic reality based on this study, which focused on grave goods found in tombs that broke with Roman funerary traditions.⁵

The German '*Ethnische Deutung*' line of research influenced previous studies.⁶ However, Pere de Palol's school in the 1960s broke with the theories of a Germanic imprint. He focused on the investigation of continuity between the Roman and Visigothic periods, coming to formulate the term Hispano-Visigothic.⁷ This school influenced the new generation. In the 1980s, Gisela Ripoll maintained a Hispano-Visigothic cultural approach presenting the Toreutics to date archaeological contexts through Visigothic fibulae.⁸

3 Berrica 2023.

4 Martínez Santa Olalla 1934; 1946; Morin de Pablos 2006; López Quiroga/Benito Díaz 2008; Barroso Cabrera 2018.

5 Martínez Santa Olalla 1934; 1946.

6 Morin de Pablos 2006; López Quiroga/Benito Díaz 2008; Barroso Cabrera 2018.

7 Palol 1966; 1986.

8 Ripoll López 1987; 1991.

Lauro Olmo Enciso has also taken a position against the ethnic interpretation with which the archaeological remains of this period are examined, underlining the importance of differentiating between the 'Visigoth' and the 'Visigothic period'.⁹ Other researchers such as Juan Antonio Quirós Castillo and Alfonso Vigil-Escalera Guirado have taken a position against this theme, moving away from a culturalist interpretation of the Visigothic period. However, Vigil-Escalera uses the method of Toréutica to date the end of Gózquez site, where the lyriform fibula found, according to their interpretation, it determines the end of the village in 750 AD, as he expresses in his article.¹⁰

On this topic, Sonia Gutiérrez Lloret has exposed how lyriform fibulae has been found in later stratigraphy, into the 9th century and that using these fibulae for dating can lead to errors of chronological interpretation.¹¹ This assumption is corroborated by the archaeological excavations at Gózquez, where lyriform fibulae were found in stratigraphic levels dating to the 8th and 9th centuries (examples: Cancho del Confesionario, La Cabilda, Dehesa de Navalvillar, Placer de Ver) (see figure 1).

Throughout the 6th century, a new type of landscape emerged that affected both urban and rural areas.¹² In this new landscape, the 'villager model' presented an independent reality, where the peasant had direct control over agricultural production: this would have been the consequence of the loss of power by the ruling elites and the aristocracy.¹³ Nevertheless, historical sources show how the aristocracy, bishops and military elites dealt with tax collection by exercising power over the region.¹⁴ In addition, written texts make it possible to classify the social differences between peasants: wage labourers, medium landowners, village chiefs, free peasants and slaves.¹⁵ In the process of rearticulating the rural landscape, the hilltops for regional taxation, control of local productive areas, and articulating centres that captured and distributed imported products and goods are all important elements to consider.¹⁶

With this analysis on the domestic and funerary spaces

9 Olmo Enciso 1991; 2002; 2008; 2012.

10 "Para el cierre de la secuencia se cuenta con otras dataciones radiocarbónicas C14 y los paralelos y relación con materiales datados en la primera y segunda mitad del siglo VIII de dentro y fuera de la región. Los contextos de la última fase (Periodo III) proporcionan además una serie de materiales cerámicos y un broche de cinturón liriforme característicos de algunos ajuares de tumbas tardovisigodas, datables a partir de mediados del siglo VII" (Vigil-Escalera 2013, 175).

11 Gutiérrez Lloret 2007, 304–305.

12 Olmo Enciso et al. 2019.

13 Vigil-Escalera 2007; Quirós Castillo 2010;

14 Vives 1967; Wickham 2008.

15 McCormick 2003; Wickham 2008; Harper 2019.

16 Castellanos 2018; Martín Viso 2015; Olmo Enciso 2018.

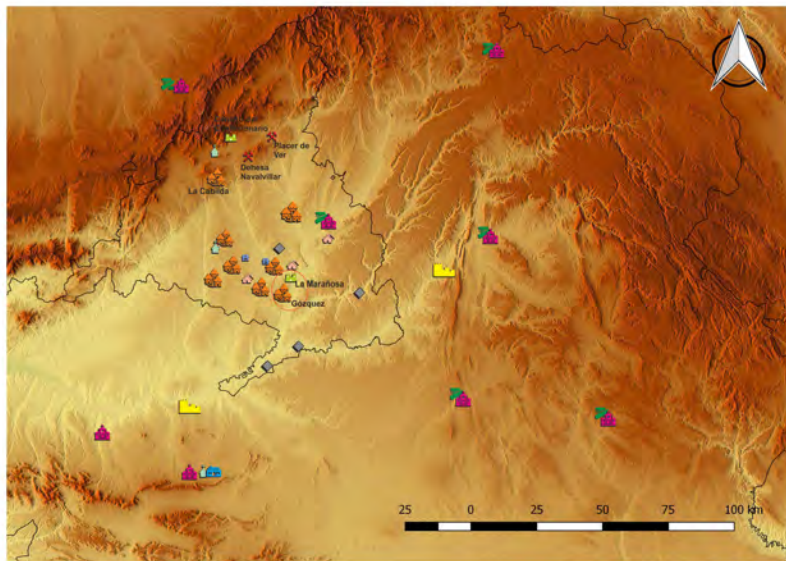


Figure 1.
Buckle in domestic stratigraphic: a) Placer de Ver; b) Dehesa de Navalvillar; c) Cancho del Confesionario; d) La Cabilda. (Created by author).

of Gózquez, this paper will contribute to the debate on the articulation of the rural landscape of the Early Medieval Period, explaining that these villages had external contacts with centres of greater prestige that controlled the territory and that within the settlement, it is possible to detect different social categories tied to agricultural, livestock and artisan work. Differentiating settlements is possible through materiality classification and the type of architecture. This includes a diverse range of building types, crafts of different forms as well as agricultural activities (large, medium, and small scale). Of particular importance are regional import objects; peculiar objects (numbered ceramics, blackboards, ballpoint pen); local and imported ceramics and valuables such as bronze, silver or gold.

The process of Islamisation from 711 AD, beginning with the arrival of the Muslim in the Iberian Peninsula, drove new changes among which technology, potteries, and a new funerary ritual are important. Nevertheless, the study of Islamic cemeteries in the countryside of the peninsular centre has been minimal.¹⁷ In some cases, Islamic tombs have not been published or are simply assimilated as rituals of the Visigothic period without examining the changes that take place during the 8th century (see figure 2). Gózquez acts as a good example for the regional diversity that illustrates the social complexity of the period, determining how these large villages were related to the power centres of the local

¹⁷ Vigil-Escalera Guirado 2004; 2009.



aristocrats.¹⁸

DATA: GÓZQUEZ DE ARRIBA

The town of Góznuez is in the municipality of Santa María de la Vega, south of Madrid (Spain). It sits in a small valley about 3 km away from the Jarama River (see figure 3). The necropolis sits on a terrace facing northeast. Near Góznuez there is a hill on which is located the Höhensiedlung of La Marañosa (5th–7th centuries). Marañosa is a hilltop with a defensive wall where local and imported materials have been found.¹⁹ These products indicate that this centre was inhabited until the 7th century. Around Marañosa (see figure 4), there are several villages, among which is Góznuez.

The study that has been developed of the territory of the Central Plateau has allowed us to detect different rural social realities that not only indicate peasant spaces but also local and regional power. The hierarchy proposed has not been pre-established through a historiographic study but is the result of an investigation and of the archaeological materiality found in each settlement that allowed the differentiation between these settlements. Therefore, these results are due to location, architecture, urbanism, artisan activities, agricultural work, regional imports, the local ceramics imported as well as metals and weapons.

Some settlements built on high and plateau hills, presenting a wall or a defensive system of a natural and anthropic type can be

Figure 2.
Map of the sites named in the article (created by author).

¹⁸ Berrica 2023.

¹⁹ I thank Javier Martínez, PhD candidate of Complutense University, for the unpublished information on the site on which he is working.

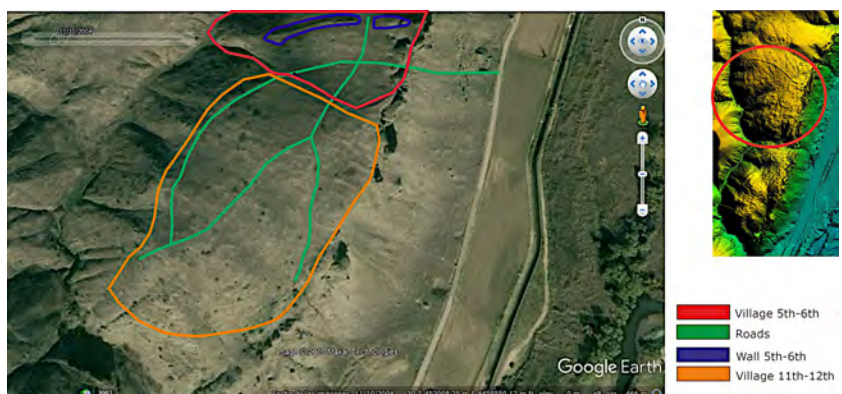


Figure 3.
View from La Marañoso towards the Gózquez area (created by author).

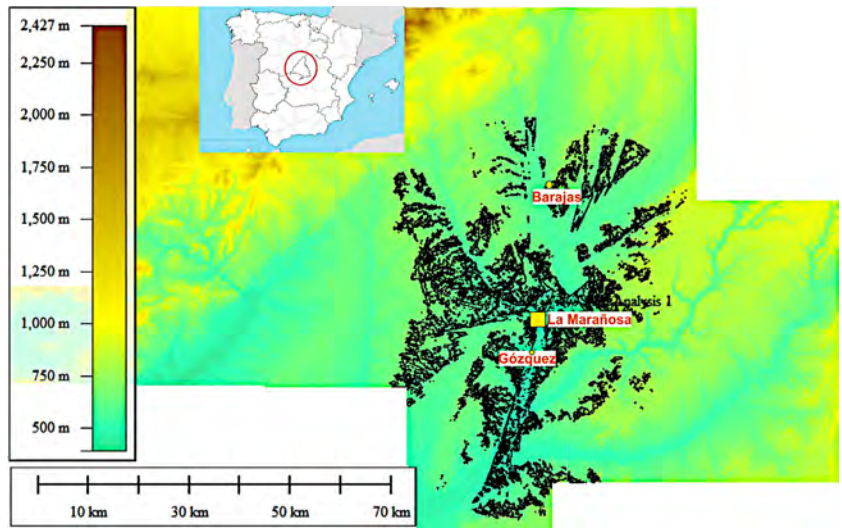


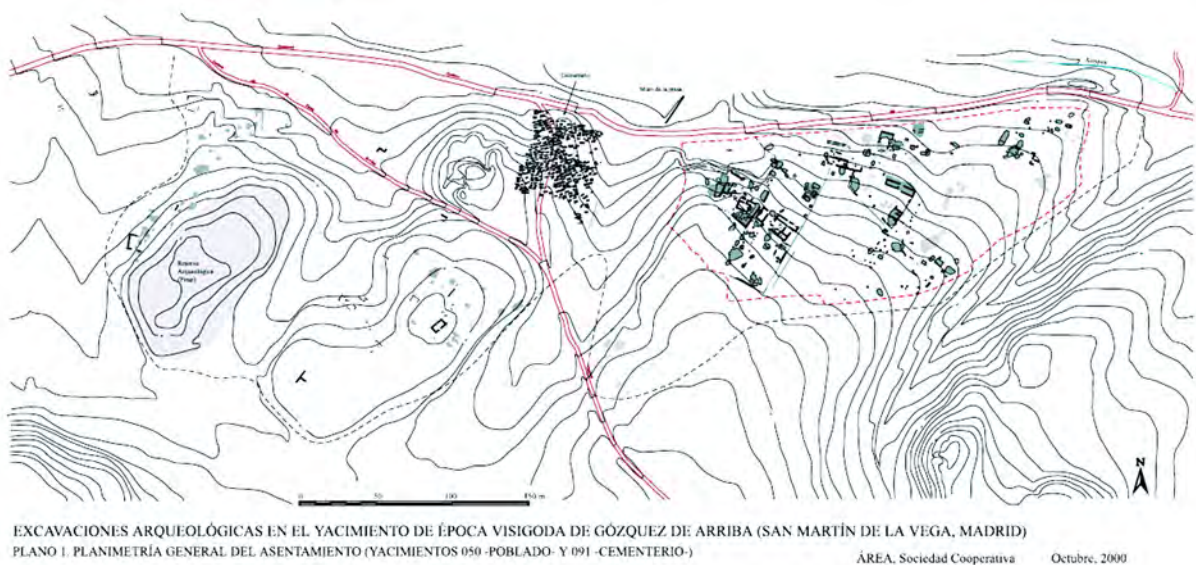
Figure 4.
La Marañoso Visibility Basin, Global Mapper (created by author).

classified as hilltop sites.²⁰ In some cases, they are tax collection and toll payment areas. In the internal structure of these settlement craft activities such as specialized pottery and metallurgical work are present. In the northern part of the Central Plateau, Cancho del Confesionario, La Cabrera, Dehesa de la Oliva, La Marañoso and Fuente de la Mora, among others, were settlements that met these requirements.²¹ The methodology used for this type of study examined the archaeological memories and the materials deposited in the Regional Archaeological Museum of Alcalá de Henares (Madrid). Stratigraphy specifies the phases of the buildings and the cemetery; in this way, it establishes a relative chronology based on the stratigraphic study. Each of the materials (2100 artefacts between ceramic, glass, and metal) have been analysed, photographed, and drawn.

THE DOMESTIC ZONE

The excavation of Gózquez, starting in 1998, represents a total

20 Berrica 2023.
21 Berrica 2022c.



excavation of 10 hectares (see figure 5).²² This archaeological complex was a novel discovery because, for the first time, a Visigothic Period cemetery with its settlement was found.²³ During the excavation it became clear that the settlement was a new foundation. Fifteen stone buildings have been excavated and the remainder are fondos de cabañas and barns, built with perishable materials.²⁴

The village's architecture is characterised by the 15-building built with stone plinth interlocked with plaster. In the countryside of the early Middle Ages, its housing structures were generally built with local materials.²⁵ These buildings have undergone a series of renovations and expansions over the course of two centuries. Huts built with perishable materials and 76 granaries for storing grain were also found. In building-15 there are two rooms, E-7/8, one with a tall mill supported by stones and the other room which seems to be of a later phase, since the walls lean against those of the previous phase. In this second room (building 8), numerous metal fragments (2601 g) were found, including slag and semi-finished products (see figure 6). Inside is what could be a quadrangular furnace for smelting iron. In the architectural complex E-15/6, there was an oil press (see figure 7); the use of this building for oil production was further corroborated with palynological studies and the remains of European *Olea* were found. The town alternated housing plots with agricultural fields, forming pre-established rectangular areas where cereal crops were

Figure 5.
Gózquez (after Contreras Martínez/Fernández Ugalde 2006, 518; Vigil-Escalera Guirado, 2013, 158).

22 Vigil-Escalera 2013.

23 Contreras Martínez/Fernández Ugalde 2006.

24 Hamerow 2002, 31; Vigil-Escalera 2000.

25 Berrica 2023.



Figure 6.
Building E-7/8. (Drawing by author after Vigil-Escalera Guirado Excavation Report 1997-1999, 126).

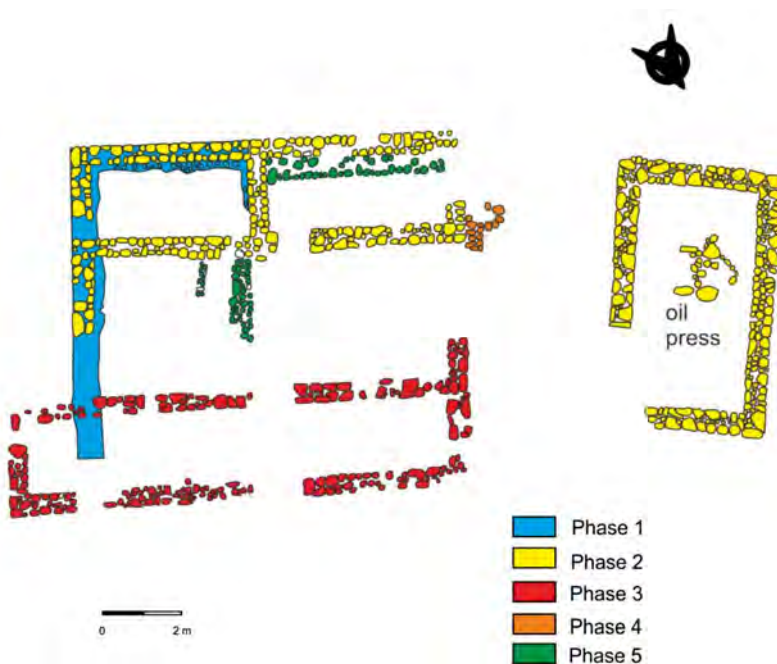


Figure 7.
Building E-15/6. (Drawing by author after Excavation Report by Vigil-Escalera Guirado 1997-1999).

grown.²⁶

Human remains have been found in the storage pit 5831, repurposed as a garbage dump. Five bodies of infants were found in the first stratigraphic layer (see figure 8), thrown into the silo without a ritual; the children were between seven and nine years old. It is found in storage pit (silo) 6640, where in the second stratigraphic stratum there are five individuals with an age between six and 20 years. A layer of stone and plaster was found on top of human remains in both silos. Graves were also sealed with stone slabs (figure 9).

²⁶ Análisis Palinológicos en Yacimientos Arqueológicos de La Comunidad Autónoma de Madrid (Barajas y San Martín De La Vega) José Antonio López Sáez Laboratorio de Arqueobotánica, Departamento de Prehistoria, Instituto de Historia, CSIC, Madrid, Memoria inédita del Encadenado (Vigil-Escalera, 2004). See also Vigil-Escalera 2009.

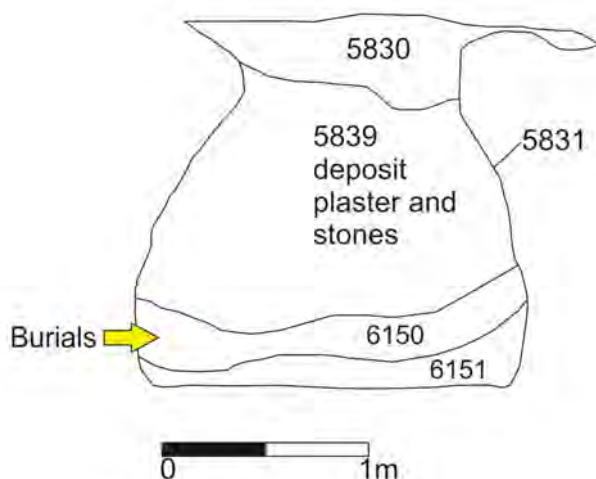


Figure 8.
Storage pit 5831 (drawing by author after Excavation Report by Vigil Escalera Guirado 1997-1999, p. 275).

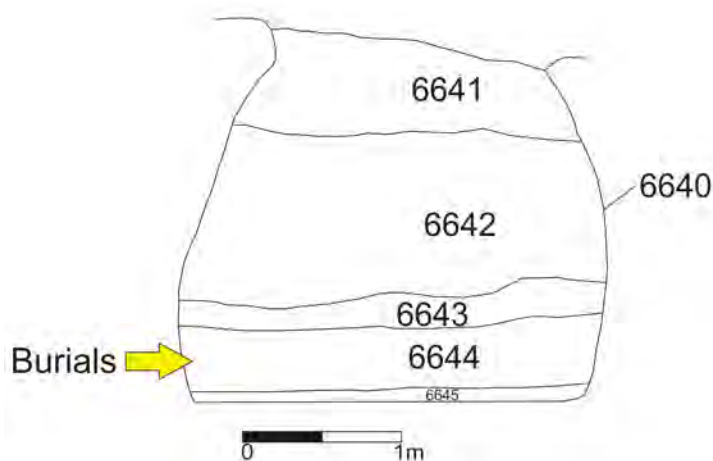


Figure 9.
Storage pit 6640 (drawing by author after Vigil-Escalera Guirado Excavation Report 1997-1999, 301).

THE MATERIAL CULTURE OF THE DOMESTIC AREA

Gózquez ceramics are mainly locally manufactured. Most of the finds are coarse wares. Where we find a great variety of pots, large, long-mouth kettles, and pans, the ceramics are primarily without (70%) any decoration. Where decoration was noted, it is primarily incised waves and at the end of the 8th century, in the stratigraphy of the domestic sphere, the painted ceramics of the Islamic Period began to appear. Among the ceramics of Islamic Period, there was finger-painted black and red ceramic of highly purified light and porous paste (end of the 8th century). The Gózquez paste has little mica, unlike other areas in the centre of the peninsula, such as the village of Barajas, with which we will compare part of the ceramics found (see figure 10).²⁷

Undoubtedly, one of the determining factors in the study of the economy of Gózquez has been the study of unpublished amphorae. So far, there are different amphora fragments on the site: two

²⁷ Berrica 2022a; Berrica 2022b.

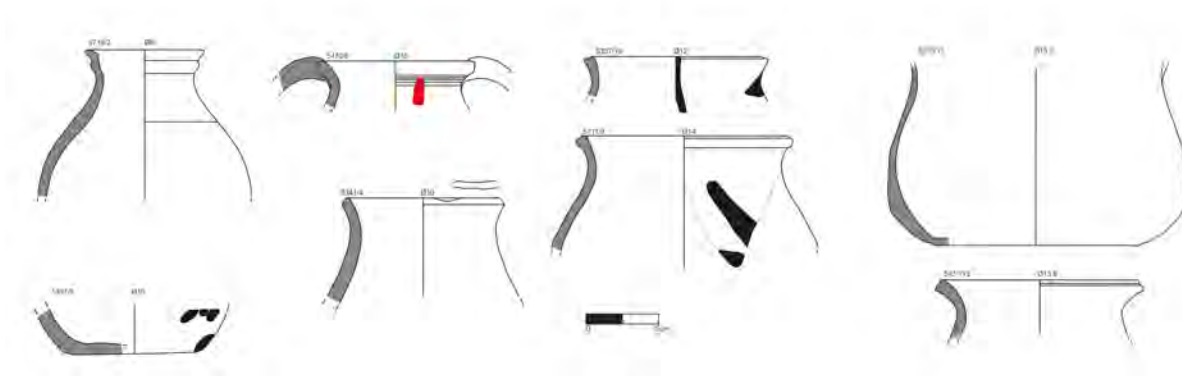


Figure 10.
Gózquez potteries 8th-9th AD (drawn and created by author).



Figure 11.
A fragment of an imported Spathion (on the left) and a regional one (on the right) found in Gózquez (created by author).

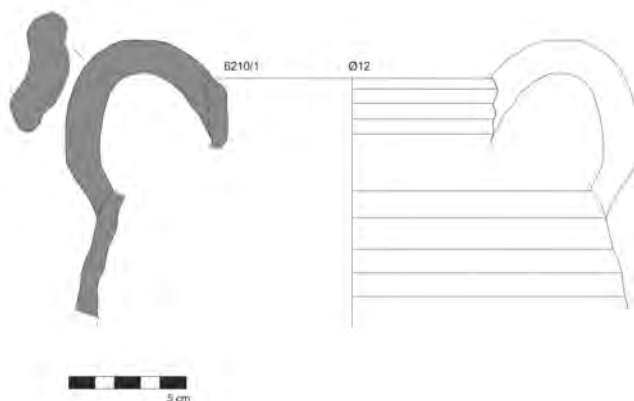


Figure 12.
Imported globular amphora found in Gózquez (created by author).

Spatheion amphorae and one Spatheion amphora fired in an alternate setting with a polished bar finish the etched decoration (see figure 11). In addition, a globular amphora made on a lathe with two handles and traces of bitumen on edge (see figure 12). All these amphoras have been found in *fondos de cabaña*.

*THE CEMETERY AREA*²⁸

The Gózquez cemetery (6th-8th centuries) is located north of the town (see figure 13).²⁹ In total, 369 tombs have been found, of which 247 have been excavated. For the study of the cemetery area, the same methodology has been chosen as for the domestic space. The excavation files have been studied, which offers the possibility of a stratigraphic record and the relative chronology. The tombs have been divided according to their different typology. A quantitative and qualitative analysis was established for the tombs with grave goods to identify the richest tombs of the others.

In this section, presenting the most interesting tombs (5 monumental tombs, 14 plaster slabs and 85 with funerary objects), which gave particularities of note. The remaining, are common, rectangular-shaped tombs excavated in the ground (126 graves), most of which do not have any defining characteristics.

Only 85 of the 247 excavated tombs were found to have funerary objects, dating between the second half of 6th and the beginning of the 7th centuries (see appendix 1). These tombs with grave goods contained bodies deposited in a supine position with an East-West orientation. Part of the study contained a quantitative analysis of the different types of tombs based on the funerary goods belonging to the second half of the 6th century and present here a table with the number of the tomb and the different objects found in each one (see appendix 2). Some tombs contain objects of different types, such as rectangular bronze buckles decorated with glass or shells, smaller buckles, rings, necklaces with glass or amber ornaments, and, in two cases, coins (see figure 14). There were only twelve tombs with large numbers of objects (numbers of tombs: 14, 33, 38, 97, 112, 123, 133, 136, 143, 148, 157, 173). We have considered these the richest tombs because they had at least five objects and, in the majority, were bronze. These belongings include bronze rings, rectangular belt plates with elaborate incised goldsmith decorations and decorated with mother-of-pearl and glass. Bronze earrings, bronze, or iron fibulae with elaborate incised or hollow decoration, bells, bronze coins, necklaces of glass

²⁸ Many thanks to Miguel Contreras for allowing me to study the excavation of the Gózquez necropolis and for his constant help/Contreras Martínez 1999.

²⁹ Contreras Martínez/Fernández Ugalde 2006.

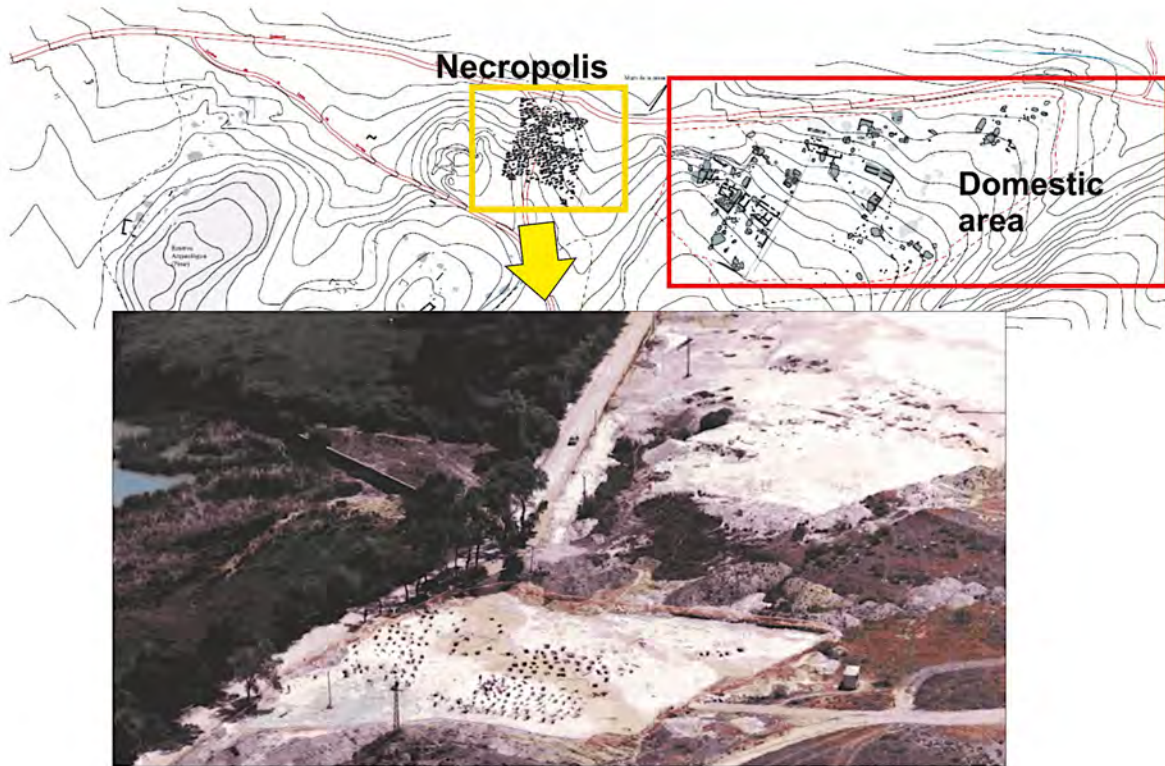


Figure 13.
Aerial photograph Gózquez cemetery (adapted from Excavation Report by Contreras Martínez, 1998 y Vigil-Escalera Guirado, 2013, 158).

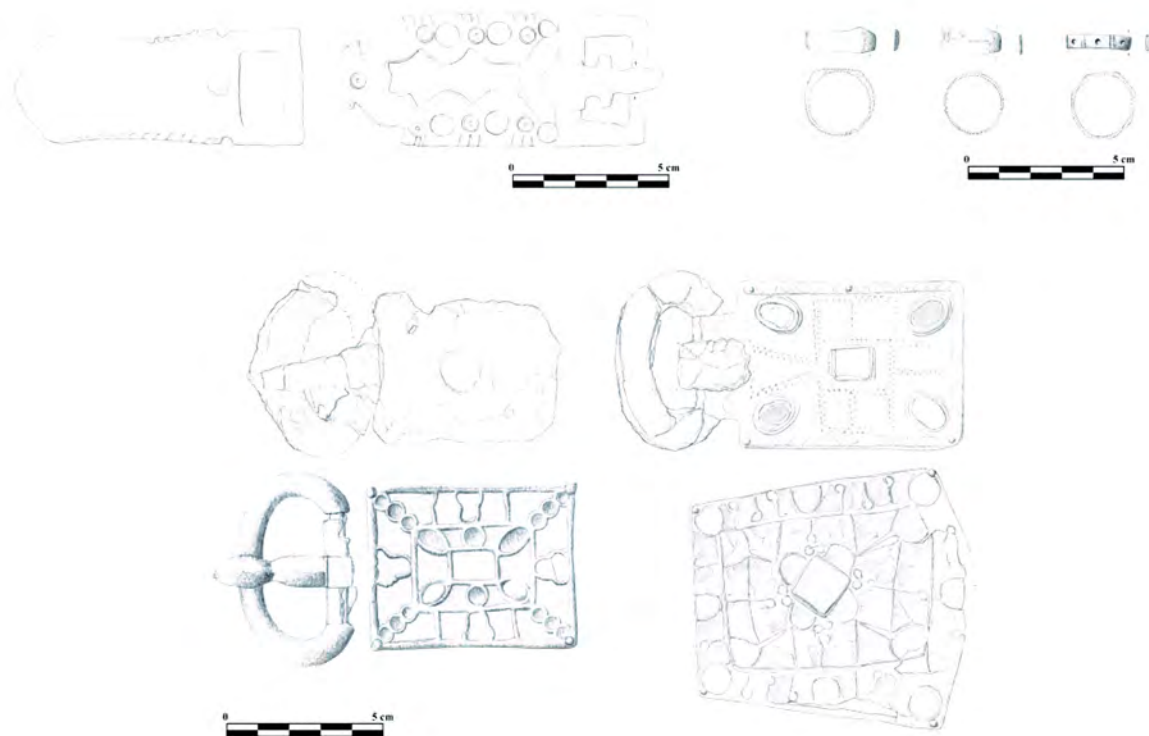
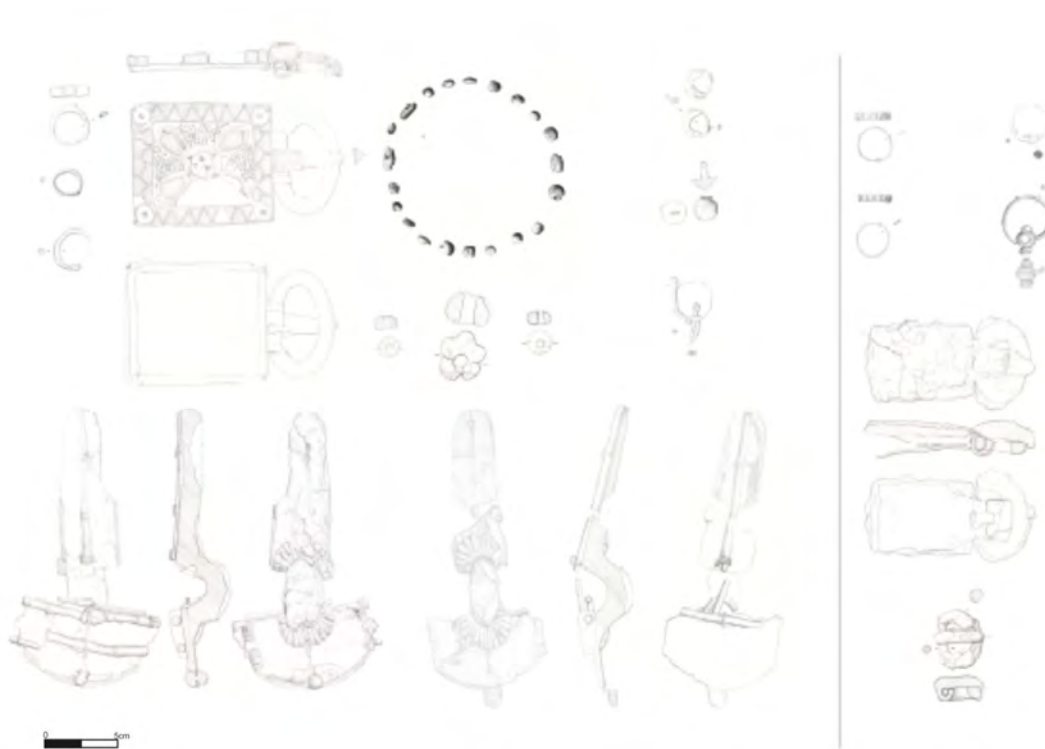


Figure 14.
Some grave findings (adapted from Contreras Martínez/Fernández Ugalde 2006, 527, 528, 530).



beads and amber have been recovered. The most characteristic elements of these tombs were scutiform bronze sconces to hold tablecloths (see figure 15). A second group contains objects of more simple materials, such as bronze or iron.

Finally, a third group consists of tombs that only contained a few iron objects. To this third group belong 19 tombs in which only one object was found. These objects can vary in quality and number. There are two tombs in which only a glass necklace bead has been found. In three, we have an iron knife, two bronze bracelets, in other three glass paste necklaces, in one bronze earring and a bronze or iron belt buckle in most (see appendix 3).

Passing from the quantitative analysis of the funerary assemblages to the qualitative analysis of the architecture, it should be highlighted that, like all tombs in this phase, they are built with plaster slabs and a rectangular. Only in the case of tomb 49 are the slabs that close the tomb made of ceramic tiles.

We also found ten tombs that had been covered with slabs but without items. In a rural world where wooden or adobe architecture was predominant, it was probably a great effort to invest in sourcing carved plaster slabs. Consequently, it is more than probable that the burials without grave goods but with plaster slabs and more elaborate characteristics are from a later phase (7th–8th centuries) (see figure 16).

The tombs are of different types, ranging from simple rectangular pits (see figure 17a) to those with a simple lateral chamber (see figure 17b) or a lateral chamber with a double burial

Figure 15.

The funerary assemblage of two individuals, a man and a woman, deposited in grave 112, the richest tomb of Gózquez (adapted from Excavation Report by Contreras Martínez, 1998).

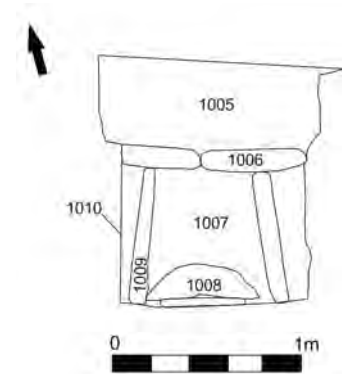


Figure 16.

Tomb with a plaster slab (adapted from Contreras Martínez/Fernández Ugalde 2006,527,528,530).

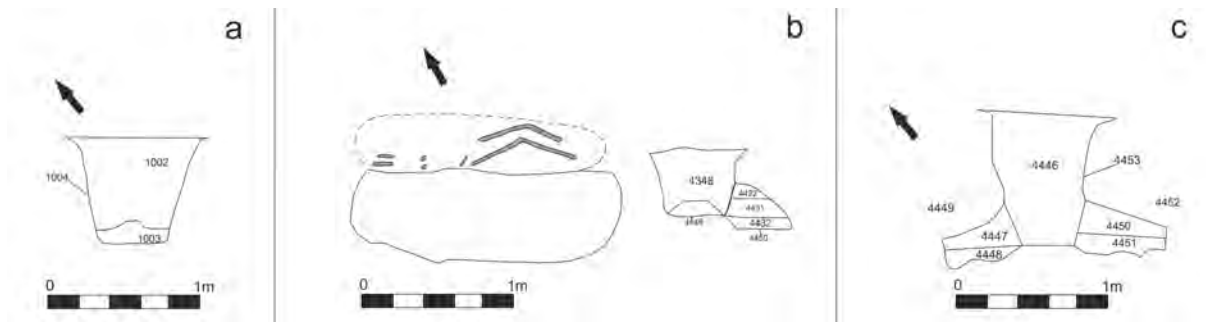


Figure 17.
Three types of simple tombs in Gózquez (drawing by author after Excavation Report by Contreras Martinez 1998).

(see figure 17c). In some cases, the graves had been used more than once. For example, tomb 136 was used up to 5 times, and seven bodies were buried there, including six adults and one child. As grave goods are found only in the first three burials and not in the last two, it is more than likely that this tomb was used throughout generations at a time of transition between the 6th and 7th centuries (see figure 18). Of the 247 graves, only 82 had wooden coffins.

We found six infant graves with the infant placed between two tiles (tomb 56, 43, 68, 82, 95, 127) (see figure 19).

Approximately ten tombs, including numbers 4 and 113, have vertically placed plaster slabs like a hypogeum, permanently enclosed with horizontally placed plasterboard (see figure 20).

Tombs 54, 76, 103, 215 are very particular because they have large stone structures that rise above the tomb and have lost the monument piece. The structure of tomb 54 is built with stones bound with clay mortar. Tiles were also found on top of the collapse debris. The whole structure is supported by two gypsum plates positioned to the sides which allowed central access to the tomb. The body was covered with a thick layer of brown earth. The pit was rectangular with an E-W orientation (see figure 21). Inside the tomb, neither the coffin nor any funerary goods were found. It is probably one of the tombs from a period later than the 6th and beginning of the 7th century where we still find funerary objects. From the 7th century onwards, the graves found in the Iberian Peninsula increasingly lose their grave goods.³⁰ Constructions in the southern part of the cemetery are located at the point of best visibility from the town.

Four tombs have been found that break with the scheme described so far (89, 91, 116, 216). These are three graves dug in the ground with the body in lateral decubitus with bent legs. The tombs are narrow, and in two cases (91 and 116), the graves have an antechamber and a side chamber. In these two cases, the bodies face north. In tomb 116, the head has not been found. In 91, the

³⁰ Azkarate Garai-Olaun 2007, 147.

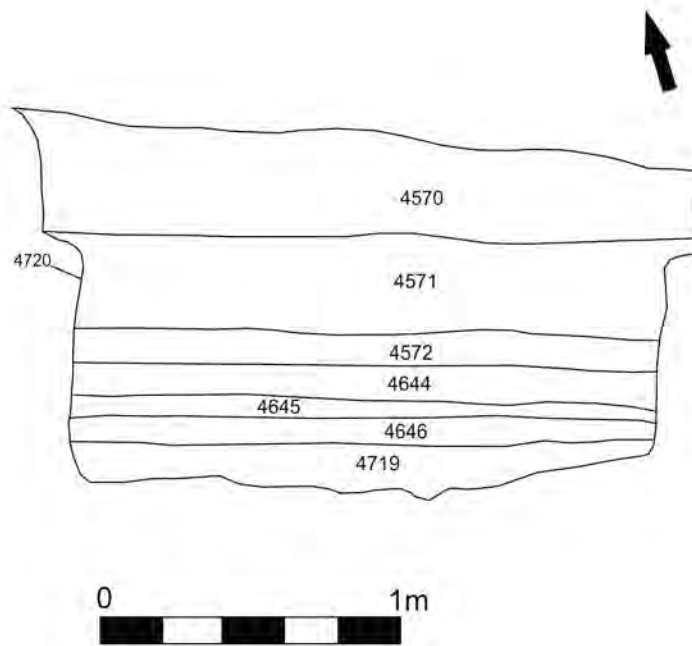


Figure 18.
 Example of Multiple Tomb in Gózquez, T. 136 (drawing by author after Excavation Report by Contreras Martinez 1998).

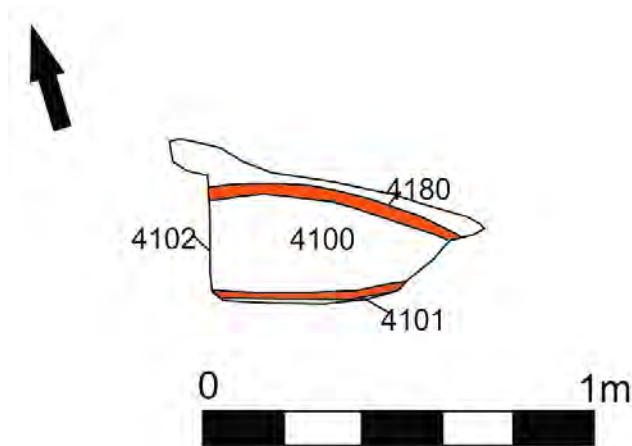


Figure 19.
 Example of a Children's Grave in Gózquez (drawing by author after Excavation Report by Contreras Martinez 1998).



Figure 20.
 Example of a tomb covered with slabs in Gózquez (after Excavation Report by Contreras Martinez 1998).

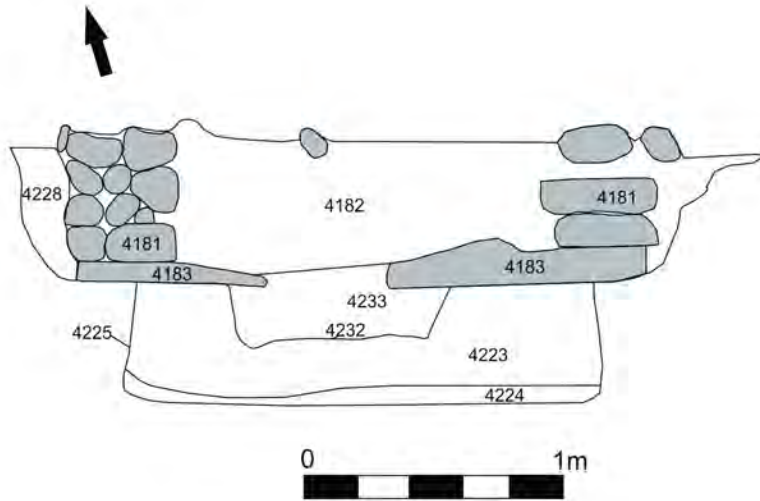


Figure 21.
Monumental tomb (drawing by author after Excavation Report by Contreras Martinez 1998).



Figure 22.
Lateral type tombs in Gózquez (created by author after Excavation Report by Contreras Martinez 1998).

head is tilted south. Finally, tombs 89 and 216 are located on the south side, a series of stones attached to the body to preserve the lateral position (see figure 22).

DISCUSSION

With this work I intend to describe the rural inhabitants. This work aims to better understand the social nuances found within the village and the social contacts at the regional level that peasants may have with local elites who resided in the hilltop and the rural aristocracy.

SOCIAL RE-EVALUATION

With the end of the Roman organisation, the rural landscape changes completely between the end of the 5th and 6th centuries. In this period, outside the urban area, a whole new social reality developed, showing that the Early Medieval landscape was very

complex. Monasteries, rural churches, aristocratic palaces, hilltops, villages of different sizes and types and farms, demonstrate the social variety of this period in the rural environment.³¹

Although the disintegration of the Roman Empire was a clear break with the large-scale state organisation, there is no reason to believe that the entire hierarchical system of intermediate administrations between the state and the peasants was interrupted, as the Councils or the De Fisco seem to show.³² From the 5th and 6th centuries, it can be argued that the elite groups in rural society began to manifest through the construction of defended hilltop sites similar to Höhensiedlungen.³³

The hilltops were more than likely serving as administrative centres that locally controlled neighbouring villages. In addition to being centres of political administration, they were also tax collection and distributors of products.³⁴ These are characterised by walls and craft activities.³⁵ In some cases, churches have been recovered within them.³⁶ In many cases, imported pottery, valuables and gold coins were found, as well as pizarras, stones on which income from products and taxes were noted. Therefore, these hilltops have been interpreted as the result of an elite initiative to exercise power in rural areas.³⁷

Through the study presented we can demonstrate that Góñez, according to the proposed hierarchy, is a 'Primary Village'.³⁸ With this term I considered a 'Primary Village', those of significant dimension with between 20 and 50 structures. They often present different types of architecture (complex buildings with stone plinths and huts built with perishable materials), which are factors that underline the social complexity within the village. Inside there are different agricultural activities of regional distribution, while specialised artisan activities, such as metallurgy, are linked to the village's needs, as is the manufacture of local ceramics and imported items. Many contacts at the regional level (purchase of ingots, acquisition of hand mills from the mountain areas, regional amphorae, sale of products, addition of wood from the mountain areas) are present whilst they act as centres with the presence of social complexity, primarily elite individuals or groups living within the village.

31 Olmo Enciso et al. 2019; Diarte Blasco 2018; Chavarría 2021.

32 Wickham 2008; Vives 1967; Castellanos 2018.

33 Berrica 2023; Olmo Enciso 2018; Olmo Enciso et al. 2018.

34 Berrica 2022c, Berrica, in press.

35 Berrica and Schibille, in press; Martín Viso et al. 2020

36 Quirós Castillo et al. 2021.

37 Wickham 2008; Martín Viso 2014; Olmo Enciso 2015; Castellanos 2018.

38 Berrica 2023.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL INDICATORS IN THE DOMESTIC AREA

The evidence for this new approach comes through the study of the archaeological materiality of an excavation. Agricultural, livestock (what types of animals) or artisan activities (primary or secondary work), the number of silos found, how many buildings in stone plinths and the materiality all indicate a relationship with hilltop and urban areas.

In the village lived people who were dedicated to a specific activity; blacksmiths, bakers or the oil process were not activities that could be improvised but required specialisation, as demonstrated in Building 7/8, with its sophisticated mill. These mills, of which only the upper part remains, shows that we are faced with a specialisation of the trade.³⁹ A similar mill in the Dehesa de Navalvillar has been recovered next to a bread oven.⁴⁰ This is more characteristic if we count that in the site, only two mills have been found in situ: in building E7 (7th–8th centuries) and in sunken-featured building 6580, associated with the first phase of the site (6th–7th centuries). An oven was associated with the sunken-featured building. This suggests the presence of two specialised bakeries of different phases in the deposit, indicating control and potential sale of this product. Because the other mills (four fragments) have been dumped in storage pits or reused in wall sockets in later constructions, it is difficult to reconstruct a wider distribution. All these hand mill fragments were made of granite, a material found in the Sierra de Guadarrama area in the north, about 70 km from the site. Therefore, it is probable that a controlled trade existed at a regional level for the production and distribution of these mills.

The probable metal workshop found in building 8 is a secondary type of ironwork workshop that catered to the village's needs. These workshops generally work with remelted metal; however, the metal at the time of recycling loses much bulk. Therefore, iron must be repeatedly added through the return of semi-finished material such as ingots. Ingot production has been found in the Dehesa de Navalvillar, where there are complete cycle workshops, metal reduction, bar or bread ingots and specialised material.⁴¹ In both the Dehesa de Navalvillar and La Cabilda, a bakery was found next to a metal workshop, so this idea of forming a kind of specialised spatial zone with workshops seems very common in these larger villages.⁴²

Of particular interest are the amphorae found. They show that

39 Berrica and Schibille, in press.

40 Berrica 2022c.

41 Berrica 2021.

42 Berrica 2022b.

the site acted as a 'Primary Village' with regional contacts. Two are whitish paste, similar to those found in Recópolis. Recópolis, an important Royal seat, located in the centre of the Iberian Peninsula, is the destination for much of the amphorae trade in the 7th and 8th centuries, with goods arriving from North Africa and travelling by land from port cities such as Valencia or Tarraco.⁴³ The reducing and alternating paste of the amphora does not appear to have a typical North African paste.⁴⁴ Instead, this type of amphorae is probably a regional production.⁴⁵ This amphora is the only one found; therefore, hypotheses are still being considered since, at the moment, I do not know of any artisan production centre of this type. However, the idea that these productions were urban or high-status centres, which were the largest recipients of imports, cannot be rejected.

The globular amphora is already from a later period, the 8th century. Although the idea that amphora imports ended in the 6th – 7th century has been considered many times, stratigraphy gives other types of results.⁴⁶ The globular amphorae, typical of the Eastern Mediterranean, continued to travel also during the Islamic Period.⁴⁷ At the moment, it is difficult to establish the manufacturing origin of these amphoras. However, future petrographic analyses will help us to understand better regional and international trade, in addition to the redistribution and reuse of amphorae that were still in good condition.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL INDICATORS IN THE NECROPOLIS

The cemetery is a space established when the settlement was founded; it seems to determine distribution dynamics. The graves do not have any apparent systematisation; however, they seem organised in groups.

For the tombs with grave goods from the first phase, it is not only essential to determine which graves had grave goods but which were the ones with the most amounts. Twelve tombs present more grave goods than the others, where the objects were almost exclusively in bronze. In Early Medieval society the quantity and quality of products found in tombs or in domestic environments can help us to establish which families were the richest.⁴⁸ One of the determining factors of goldsmith objects is that no specialised workshop has been found in rural areas, while

43 Bonifay/ Bernal Casasola 2008; Olmo Enciso et al. 2020.

44 Bonifay 2004.

45 Thank you so much to M. Bonifay for helping me in the study of this amphorae.

46 For what concerns the analysis of the pottery, see Bernal Casasola 2010; regarding the stratigraphic studies, see Bonifay/ Bernal Casasola 2008.

47 Molinari 2018.

48 Wickham 2008; Olmo Enciso 2015; Castellanos 2018.

they have been found in urban areas.⁴⁹ Undoubtedly, these objects can be considered a luxury, the symbol of regional exchanges between elites and rural areas.⁵⁰

In the first half of the 7th century, there is a marked decrease in grave goods across the Iberian Peninsula.⁵¹ This phenomenon manifests itself in other areas of Europe as well.⁵² However, we cannot reject the idea that monumental tombs, located in the most visible area of the cemetery, could be a new standard of distinction.

Islamic law forbade mixed burials between Muslims and Christians.⁵³ Nevertheless in rural areas, in the 8th century, it is easy to find tombs of different creeds inside cemeteries.⁵⁴ However, early Islamic tombs in rural areas show uniformity in mixed cemeteries. Consequently, in the countryside, family relationships and local traditions appear to be the strongest at first. Initially, the graves seem to be addressed to only a few people; in the case of Gózquez, we find these graves in 4 different points, which could be considered as four different family groups.

The fact that there are few tombs with overt Islamic conversion is because initially only the elite who lived within the village converted to the new creed. Nonetheless, mixed cemeteries would demonstrate that within rural areas, family and local ties were more important than the religious rules imposed by the new Islamic state.⁵⁵ This is simply a theory emerging from a more exhaustive study of rural areas with cemeteries that present early Islamic burials; however, the Islamic ritual, devoid of grave good and monumentality, is more challenging to interpret.⁵⁶ Moreover, the fact that in Gózquez, it is difficult to establish the majority of sex for the bodies due to the poor preservation of the bones makes part of the analysis difficult.

CONCLUSION

This paper brings a new perspective by framing the settlement in a broader study, which includes other types of dynamics: economic, commercial, and social ones.

The analysis of the archaeological material found in the site allows the understanding of the relationships within the town and outside of it, determining the degree of interaction with the

49 Olmo Enciso 2006.

50 Brownlee 2021; Azkarate Garai-Olaun/García Camino 2012.

51 Azkarate Garai-Olaun 2007.

52 Brownlee 2021.

53 Casal 2021.

54 Berrica 2023.

55 Berrica 2023.

56 Petersen 2013.

hilltops and urban centres. It is believed that the archaeological materiality found in the site can help us to consider Gózquez as a primary village, where we see a discreet social hierarchy with contacts with local elites (La Marañosa) and regional zones (areas of the Sierra de Guadarrama and cities like Recópolis).

The tombs with the richest grave goods from the 6th century reveal that there were wealthy people in the village, which indicates a social differentiation compared to the unfurnished tombs.

It has been argued that the lack of grave goods in the tombs since the early 7th century is a notable change in early medieval society. However, the position of the tombs (where they are located within the cemetery) or the materials with which they are built can assist in determining hierarchical differentiation. The differentiation can be clearly seen inside the town, such as the extension of buildings into stone plinths, the specialisation of some of these buildings (oil processing, bakery, and metallurgical work), indicating that inside the village there were different trades. With the arrival of the Arabs, graves with Islamic rituals gradually appeared. This reveals an early cultural and social change within the settlement. Could it be that the first conversions to Islam were only those of wealthy people from the village, as seen by the conversions to Christianity?

In conclusion, I believe that only with a careful study of the materiality and stratigraphic research is it possible to recognise the diachronic changes of the site and the social and religious transformations of those who live in the area. Therefore, I want to underline that in Gózquez, it cannot be denied that there were within the village different hierarchical groups demonstrating elite and different artisans, in addition to the peasants. Indeed, among the inhabitants of rural areas it is increasingly evident that there were different degrees of social distinction in the Early Middle Ages.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

For this article, I want to thank the Museo Arqueológico y Paleontológico (MAP) of Alcalá de Henares, especially to its director Enrique Baquedano, its curator Elena Carrión and Mario Torquemada for his photography. I want to thank Miguel Contreras for the opportunity to study his unpublished memoir and for the help with the study of materials of Gózquez.

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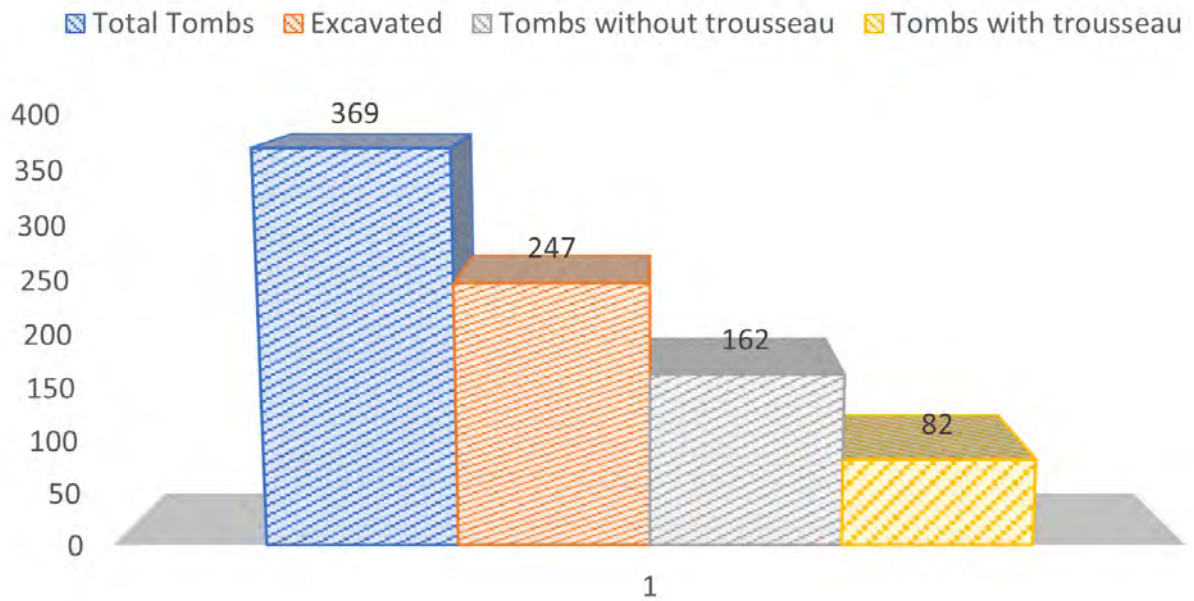
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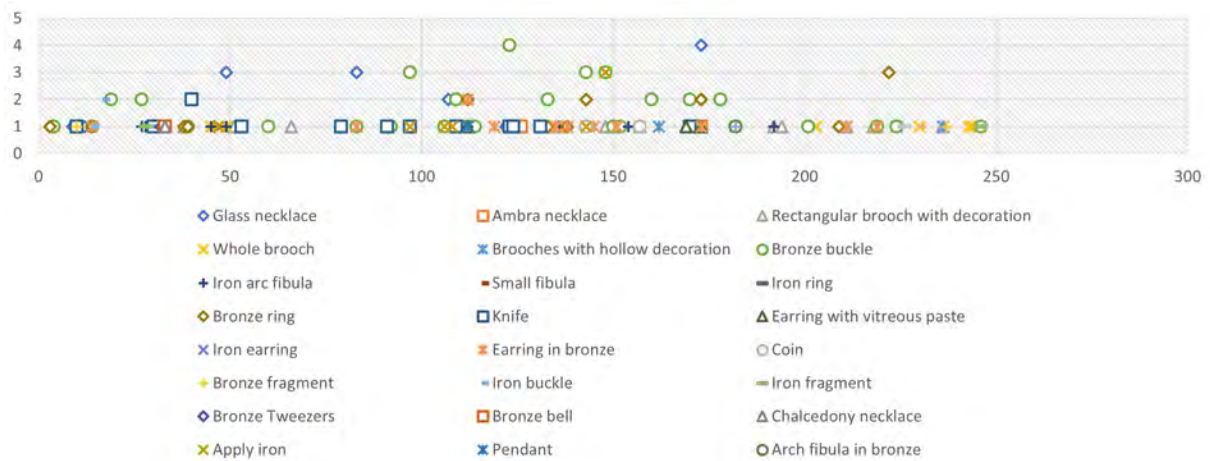
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APPENDIX 1: TOMB ANALYSIS STUDY (CREATED BY AUTHOR)



APPENDIX 2: ANALYSIS OF THE GRAVE GOODS OF THE 85 TOMBS (CREATED BY AUTHOR).



APPENDIX 3: THE TOMBS THAT POSSESS A SINGLE OBJECT (CREATED BY AUTHOR).

Grave	Single object
3	Bronze ring
4	Bronze buckle
9	Glass beads
12	Glass bead
46	Glass bead
49	Glass beads
51	Bronze rectangular buckle
53	Iron knife
60	Bronze buckle
66	Iron buckle
107	Glass bead
111	Bronze buckle
113	Bronze buckle
114	Bronze buckle
119	Bronze earring
122	Glass bead
126	Amber bead
131	Iron knife
132	Bronze rectangular buckle

German and French Colonial Restitution - 'New Relational Ethics' or Using the Legacy of Empire?

Aurora Hamm

ABSTRACT

Colonial restitutions are one of the most hotly debated discourses of the last few years, despite the fact that the debate has been going on since the 1960s. After the publication of the Sarr and Savoy Report in 2018, both France and Germany have made significant steps towards restitutions, which constitutes a meaningful switch in policy. While the restitutions of France and Germany are not framed as gifts but rather the righting of historical wrongs, they still entail one state giving one or several cultural objects to another one. I argue that this way, the restituted objects are instruments of soft power through public and cultural diplomacy. The (former) coloniser states utilise them, with geopolitical considerations in mind, as a means of 'restarting' their bilateral relationships and thus obtaining a certain reciprocity from the restitution. It is crucial for both Germany and France to be perceived as acting ethically, and according to their own proclaimed values by the populations they are restituting objects to. The objects they are returning thus take on a new meaning by being restituted. The materials act as ambassadors, adding a level of symbolism to their specific materiality. As such, (former) coloniser states can benefit from their former empires a final time.

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► [Profile page](#)

INTRODUCTION

In the 1960s and 1970s, (newly) independent (sub-Saharan) African nations started lobbying for a restitution of their moveable cultural heritage, an estimated 90–95 % of which is still stored in Western museums.¹ B. Savoy describes in her 2021 book *Afrikas Kampf um seine Kunst. Geschichte einer Postkolonialen Niederlage* how these

¹ Sarr and Savoy quote this number in their 2018 report and refer back to a speech made by Alain Godonou at a UNESCO forum in 2007. It is unclear to me where this number originated, especially with the lack of catalogues in Western ethnographic museums that will be problematised in this text. Nonetheless, Western museums possess the vast majority of heritage objects of sub-Saharan Africa.

debates were crushed on the institutional bulwarks of Western museums and parliaments.² It is no wonder that one of the biggest accomplishments of the debate of the '60s and '70s, the 1970 UNESCO Convention on the Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, was almost immediately ratified by formerly colonised or other source countries of antiquities, while coloniser countries such as France, the United Kingdom, and Germany only ratified or accepted in the late '90s or early 2000s.³ So why, if the debate around restitutions was already held in the 20th century, are restitutions looking more likely in the 21st century?

None of the facts have changed, in fact, the objects' prolonged stay of an additional 40-50 years since the decolonial movement from the 1960s onwards in Western museums has been used as an argument *not* to reconstitute them. In France, for instance, the argument that was made by opponents of restitution is that due to the time the objects have spent as property of the French nation, they have become inalienable to the French nation state.⁴ This argument was backed by a conscious political decision. In the 1960s, several (former) colonisers states put the inalienability of colonial collections into law, amongst them France, where collections were enshrined as property of the Ministry of Culture, making them almost inviolable.⁵ Yet, we are seeing more steps towards restitution than ever before, this time with the political backing needed for potential sustainable change.

The term 'restitution' includes an admission of wrongdoing.⁶ It means a wrong is being rightened, and an object returns to its *rightful* owner.⁷ When a restitution is carried out between nation states, as I am focussing on here, the material object and accompanying gesture are not understood as a gift but are understood to be righting a historical wrong.⁸ Yet, similar to a gift, it involves one or several objects moving from the territory of one

2 "Africa's Fight for its Art. Story of a Postcolonial Defeat" (translated by the author).

3 UNESCO 1970, ► <https://www.unesco.org/en/legal-affairs/convention-means-prohibiting-and-preventing-illicit-import-export-and-transfer-ownership-cultural>; see here for a list of State Parties in chronological order: ► https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/liste_etats_partis_convention_1970_en.pdf.

4 Sarr/Savoy 2018, 21. I will be using the English translation of the report by Burk for this paper for readability.

5 Savoy 2021, 13.

6 Merriam Webster Online Lexicon, restitution. ► <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/restitution>; Perrot 2022, 361.

7 Sarr/Savoy 2018, 29.

8 Sarr/Savoy 2018, 29: "The implicit act of the gesture of restitution is very clearly the recognition of the illegitimacy of the property that one had previously claimed ownership of, no matter what the duration of time was. As a consequence, the act of restitution attempts to put things back in order, into proper harmony. To openly speak of restitutions is to speak of justice, or a re-balancing, recognition, of restoration and reparation [...]".

state to the territory of another without the exchange of money. This practice is alike a diplomatic gift exchange that has been practised for centuries and is “constitutive” for diplomacy.⁹ In the context of colonial restitutions however, this means that the colonisation and accompanying systems of power and suppression are recognised, or as President Macron put it in his speech at the University of Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso): “[...] *crimes de la colonisation européenne sont incontestables et font partie de notre histoire.*”¹⁰

After this speech, President Macron commissioned the *Rapport sur la restitution du patrimoine culturel africain. Vers une nouvelle éthique relationnelle* by F. Sarr and Savoy, which was delivered in November 2018.¹¹ Following the report, French national legislation was changed, and in November 2021, 26 objects that were specifically mentioned in the Sarr and Savoy report, were returned to Benin from the Quai Branly Museum in Paris.¹² Restitution, in this case, means that the objects have physically moved back from Paris to Cotonou. The swift political action of the French legislature, especially when paired with little pressure from constituents, suggests a strong motivation of the French state to engage on the issue. While there is a growing movement towards restitution in civil society, Macron’s initiative was not born out of domestic policy considerations but foreign policy goals.¹³ In December 2022, German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock and the Commissioner for Culture Claudia Roth flew to Nigeria to physically return 20 Benin-Bronzes, showcasing that restitution is high enough on the German foreign policy agenda to include not one but two German ministers.¹⁴

Why does restitution have more political backing now? My central thesis concerns the fact that restitutions never occur in a vacuum. They are done in the context of the geopolitical situation and given that the geopolitical situation has evidently changed dramatically in the past few years, it seems prudent to investigate the effects of this on restitutions. For one, the role the African continent plays in international politics has changed. In a new global competition with China and Russia on one side and the West

9 Neumann 2021, 192.

10 Elysée 2017: “[...] the crimes of European colonization cannot be disputed and are part of our history.” (Translated by Elysée Palace). ► <https://www.elysee.fr/en/emmanuel-macron/2017/11/28/emmanuel-macrons-speech-at-the-university-of-ouagadougou>

11 Sarr/Savoy 2018, 1.

12 New York Times 2021. ► <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/28/arts/design/france-benin-restitution.html>

13 Paquette 2020, 303.

14 Deutsche Welle, 2022. ► <https://www.dw.com/de/baerbock-rueckgabe-der-benin-bronzen-war-laengst-ueberfaellig/a-64157668>.

on the other, the so-called Global South has benefited from a strengthening of its strategic leverage. As can be seen in recent United Nations Assembly votes, such as ES-11/1 (2 March 2022) condemning Russia's aggression against Ukraine, which "sent shockwaves" through Western diplomacy because of the lack of support it received from African nations.¹⁵ Even before the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, Germany and France both enhanced their foreign policy presence in Africa and the war only exasperated this development.¹⁶

China's investment in Africa has made it the biggest foreign player on the continent and enabled it to compete for influence in a region that is rich in natural resources and was once considered a European sphere of influence.¹⁷ A study from June 2022 on the perception of China and the European Union in Africa shows that the only reliable lead the EU has on China is in soft power related activities.¹⁸ It makes sense then, that leaders of the EU would build on this soft power and, as I will show, use the material remnants of their colonial oppression to achieve this. For this, I will compare the policies of the two biggest EU countries, the French Republic and the German Federal Republic, concerning restitutions to sub-Saharan African countries, as the two states are diplomatically and culturally closely linked with synergies that influence each other.¹⁹ Yet, they approach restitutions in different ways.

While the French position was laid out in the Ouagadougou speech by President Macron and the Sarr and Savoy report, the German position was characterised by broad public discussion and the consensus building that is needed in a federal state.²⁰ This process has resulted in an "unconditional" return of all Benin Bronzes that are currently in Germany to Nigeria.²¹ This decision

15 Akum, Tull 2023, 2. ► https://www.swp-berlin.org/assets/afrika/publications/policybrief/MTAPB13_Akum_Tull_2023_Strategic_Competition.pdf

16 Askar 2020, ► <https://epc.ae/en/details/featured/germanys-tendency-to-enhance-its-presence-in-africa-limits-and-motives>; Cohen 2022, ► <https://carnegieendowment.org/2022/06/02/will-france-s-africa-policy-hold-up-pub-87228>.

17 Shikwati et al. 2022, 5-6.

18 Shikwati et al. 2022, 6. The study makes clear that China will overtake the EU on most aspects of partnership with Africa; however, currently " [...] the European Union is perceived to have a commanding lead on soft power-related activities such as the arts at 77.6% against China's 49.2%."

19 The Sarr and Savoy report is limited in scope to sub-Saharan countries. Thus, I will refer to sub-Saharan Africa here, although occasionally making points that are applicable to all 54 African nation states, in which case I will speak of 'Africa'. Furthermore, I use the terms EU and Europe interchangeably for readability.

20 Restitution - Absolution? Die Benin Bronzen und das koloniale Erbe. Podiumsdiskussion der Forschungsstelle "Hamburgs (post-)koloniales Erbe", ► <https://lisa.gerda-henkel-stiftung.de/benino81121>.

21 Auswärtiges Amt 2022a, 3. ► <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/blob/2540404/8a42afe8f5d79683391f8188eegee016/220701-benin-bronzen-polerkl-data.pdf>

from July 2022 goes beyond guidelines by the German Museums Association that recommend restitutions (in specific circumstances) and with a return of 1130 objects far beyond any restitution so far.²²

I will examine how restitutions are used as a tool of diplomacy. For this, I will utilise the understanding of M. Mauss of gifts (*le don*). I will show that restitutions can be used as a tool of soft power diplomacy and a new public diplomacy meant to influence the population of a country, not primarily its foreign ministry or government. I will also consider the role of the materiality of restituted objects, a topic that is severely understudied and underestimated.²³

I question if Sarr and Savoy's goal of a new relationship with (sub-Saharan) African countries based on a new relational ethic is possible or even a goal shared by German and French politicians. I conclude that the utilisation of restitutions is embedded in a colonialist power structure which allows (former) coloniser states to continue to benefit from the material legacy of their empire.

RESTITUTION AS DIPLOMACY

Restitutions in a European context are usually based on the Holocaust paradigm and the Washington Principles, which formalised principles for the return of Nazi-looted objects in 1998.²⁴ Colonial looted objects are perceived differently, partially because the memory of the Holocaust overshadows the one of colonialism, but also because restitutions in the context of the Holocaust take place on an individual level, with heirs reclaiming their murdered families' property back.²⁵ With regard to colonial objects, the discussion is generally between states.²⁶

Mauss is traditionally associated with the exchange of objects between individuals, but in his writings, he also explicitly looked at exchanges between states. G. Mallard's positioning of Mauss' writings on *le don* next to his other socio-political writings, enables us to look beyond the abstract theory of social exchange and gain a better understanding of Mauss' theory. The crucial aspect for Mauss was that a gift, *le don*, conditions an exchange.²⁷ According

22 Washington Conference on Holocaust Era Assets, 1998. ► <https://www.state.gov/washington-conference-principles-on-nazi-confiscated-art/>; Deutscher Museums Bund 2021, 81. ► <https://www.museumbund.de/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/e-reader-zum-leitfaden-umgang-mit-sammlungsgut-aus-kolonialen-kontexten-de.pdf>

23 Rudolph 2016, 4.

24 For an in-depth analysis of the legal framework of Nazi-restitution, see: Campfens 2021, Chapter 4.

25 Campfens 2021, 228.

26 This has led some researchers to propose a version of the Washington Principles for colonial-looted objects. See: Van Beurden 2017.

27 Mauss 2016 (1925), 177.

to Mauss, the gift retains something of the giver and establishes a social bond between giver and receiver that creates an obligation to reciprocate in one form or another.²⁸ In his political writings in the journal *Le Populaire* between 1920 and 1924, Mauss applied his theory of “*le don*” on nation states and diplomacy, focusing on the question of international debts – mainly German reparations after World War 1. According to Mallard, Mauss understood reparations and, crucially, debt cancellations as a way to create bonds between nations.²⁹ A gift one nation gives the other thus represents a bond between those nations as well as the expectation to reciprocate. By giving, you are receiving. As Mallard argues, this dynamic is not limited to traditional gifts but was understood by Mauss to include actions such as debt cancellations.³⁰ Thus, when one nation restitutes one or several objects, it can be argued that there is an expectation to reciprocate.³¹ The following analysis will show that this expectation is expressed as a desire for a new relationship with sub-Saharan African countries, both in policy papers and academic debate, in France and Germany.

This expectation is explicitly mentioned by Sarr and Savoy, who pose the question if restitutions should be done: “[...] as a tool of soft power aiming to “revalorize” France’s image to an African generation of youth that is less and less francophile?”.³² Interestingly, they do not answer this question in the report but instead go on to describe the ultimate goal of restitutions, which, in their view, is the establishment of a new relational ethics between France (Europe) and (sub-Saharan) Africa.³³

MATERIALITY

One of the ways these new relational ethics will be achieved, according to Sarr and Savoy, is through the materials themselves. They point to the transformative power of heritage for community building “[...] by a return of emblematic objects, the memory work can function as an operator for the reconstruction of the identity of subjects and communities.”³⁴ They also point out that the returned objects have a long history outside of their original context, a fact that has been used habitually to argue against restitution.³⁵ The object’s original meaning has switched not only

28 Mauss 2016 (1925), 57, 71.

29 Mallard 2011, 240-243.

30 Ibid.

31 Kustermans 2021, 105.

32 Sarr/Savoy 2018, 30.

33 Sarr/Savoy 2018, 3.

34 Sarr/Savoy 2018, 35.

35 Sarr/Savoy 2018, 21. For a study on the social transformation of heritage projects in the colonial era see: Van Beurden 2013.

by their forceful removal but also because their original society has changed. Just like displaced people, they present a historical (and often traumatic) migration and operate in a relation defined by resistance and assimilation to their host country.³⁶ J. Peffer talked of “Africa’s diasporas of images” and Savoy and Sarr take this interpretation further by applying the idea to restituted objects.³⁷ According to them, the returned objects have become part of the relational history of the (two) countries and societies.³⁸ Following this logic, when an object is restituted, it transforms into a symbol of a new start in the relations between the two countries. They become “mediators of a relation that needs to be reinvented.”³⁹ Without explicitly acknowledging it, Sarr and Savoy follow Mauss here, according to whom objects are “followed by their former owner, and they follow him”.⁴⁰ This seems to be the hope of French and German diplomats, who are at once ridding themselves of the colonial aftertaste of the objects in their collection by restituting them and creating a symbol of their ethical benevolence.

This function as a symbol only works because of the narrative and meaning ascribed to the objects by both the formerly colonised and former coloniser state. When looking at the objects returned in 2021 from the Quai Branly Museum, the monumentality and materiality of the objects are striking. Both politicians and scholars of contemporary diplomacy tend to underestimate the meaning of materiality in politics.⁴¹ As many restituted objects hold ritualistic or religious meaning for their community of origin, questions of object agency offer a fascinating avenue for future study of the materiality of restitution. I will not further engage with the agency and objects as actants here but would like to point to this possibility.⁴²

Research into the material culture of diplomacy is suitable for studying processes of cultural transfer and cultural hybridisation of the early modern and modern times.⁴³ This is especially true when it comes to restitutions, where the material, size and other aspects of objects that are requested for restitution and that are finally restituted should be studied more extensively. A specific role in this context is the restitution of human remains. Their materiality seems to transcend the debate about provenience, easing their return. Through their specific materiality,

36 Peffer 2005, 340-341.

37 Peffer 2005, 339.

38 Sarr/Savoy 2018, 40. For a similar analysis see Barker 2000.

39 Sarr/Savoy 2018, 39.

40 Mauss 2016 (1925), 178.

41 Rudolph 2016, 4.

42 For more on this see Latour 1992.

43 Rudolph 2016, 27.

they are less likely to have a concrete provenance, yet human remains have been restituted (from European countries) in greater numbers and during a time when the general debate about restitutions appeared to have been frozen.⁴⁴ This is pointed out by Sarr and Savoy, but they do not mention if this could, in turn, mean that other materials are less likely to be returned.⁴⁵ The 26 Quai Branly objects do not necessarily point this way, as the objects' monumentality cannot be overstated. They were, other than what the debate around colonial objects being in the depots of European museums sometimes suggests, central pieces of the museum. This fact has received little attention so far, suggesting that the materiality of the restituted objects is still being neglected as a field of study.

C. Stahn speaks of the "dual face" of the Benin Bronzes, which stand for both colonial looting and violence but also for the changing tide on colonial objects.⁴⁶ The Benin Bronzes, which Germany restituted to Nigeria in 2022, symbolise this change as they receive new meaning explicitly through the physical act of restitution. Amongst the objects was a richly decorated key which had previously been exhibited in the Rautenstrauch-Joest-Museum in Cologne. The mayor of Cologne used its materiality as a metaphor, pointing out that this key would symbolically open doors between the Cologne and Nigerian museums.⁴⁷ Indeed, during the official ceremony, in which the German ministers returned the first objects to Nigeria, the foreign minister used the specific materiality of the key as well: "*Heute ist der Schlüssel zurück. Er ist wieder da, wo er hingehört. [...] Dieser Schlüssel ist ein Symbol. Er kann uns helfen, ein neues Kapitel in der Freundschaft zwischen unseren beiden Völkern aufzuschließen. Dafür sind wir heute hier – um die Tür in die Zukunft unserer Freundschaft weit zu öffnen.*"⁴⁸ This way, the German state has imbued the materiality of the restituted key with the symbolism of its return to Nigeria and simultaneously literally and figuratively opened the door to a new friendship between the two nations.

44 Indeed, several restitutions of human remains were carried out in France and Germany, including the 2002 remains of Saartjie Baartman from France to South Africa and the remains of several victims of the genocide of the Hereros and Namas from Germany to Namibia in 2018.

45 Sarr/Savoy 2018, 17.

46 Stahn 2022, 53.

47 Süddeutsche Zeitung 2022, ► <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/geschichte-koelner-benin-bronzen-gehoren-nun-wieder-nigeria-dpa.urn-newsml-dpa-com-20090101-221215-99-911111>.

48 Auswärtiges Amt 2022b: "Today the key is back. It is back where it belongs. [...] This key is a symbol. It can help us open a new chapter in the friendship between our two peoples. That is what we are here for today - to open wide the door to the future of our friendship." (Translated by the author).

CULTURAL AND NEW PUBLIC DIPLOMACY IN FRANCE AND GERMANY

In October 2021, France organised the New Africa-France summit in the southern French student city of Montpellier. Not a single foreign head of state was present. Instead, Macron addressed the audience of young civil society leaders from (French-speaking) Africa. Here again, the return of cultural objects was addressed in panels and in a discussion with several young African men and women. Macron was able to give concrete proof of the changing French attitude towards cooperation with Africa and specifically former French colonies by pointing to the return of cultural objects he himself had set into motion. Patrice Talon, the Benin President, might have signed the documents returning the Quai Branly objects to his country at the Elysée Palace in November 2021, but the intended receiver of the objects, is arguably not Talon and his government. Governments come and go. Macron's intended audience is the youth of (French-speaking) Africa, an estimated 70% of the continent's sub-Saharan population.⁴⁹ This New Africa-France summit is one of many examples of France's strategy of public diplomacy, for which they utilise the restitution of colonial objects.

Since the dawn of diplomacy, and accelerated through the emergence of the printing press, the internet and social media, governments have not only connected with other governments but also with foreign populations directly. Public diplomacy can thus be defined as the relationship between diplomats and the foreign public with whom they work.⁵⁰ Increasingly, politicians engage with foreign audiences directly through social media. Cooperation with civil society and knowledge networks well beyond the limited foreign policy experts are central to establishing soft power via public diplomacy.⁵¹ Linked to this is cultural diplomacy, meaning a governmental practice of exchanging culture among nations (and their populations) that fosters cultural exchange.⁵² The central dilemma of this was identified by I. Ang et al. as cultural diplomacy has the "primary aim of serving strategic interests of national governments while at the same time holding out the promise of moving beyond the national interest to support a greater good through mutual cultural exchanges."⁵³

49 UN 2021, ► <https://www.un.org/ohrlls/news/young-people's-potential-key-africa's-sustainable-development>.

50 Melissen 2005, xix.

51 Melissen 2011, 2.

52 Cummings 2003, 1.

53 Ang et al. 2015, 379.

Soft power, also called the postmodern variant of power over opinion, has grown in importance following the World Wars.⁵⁴ Coined by J. Nye, it goes beyond culture to also include “[a nation’s] political values (when it lives up to them at home and abroad), and its foreign policies (when they are seen as legitimate and having moral authority)”.⁵⁵ Public and cultural diplomacy are among the key instruments of soft power, giving states the means to shape their image abroad and supporting in framing international norms, values and policies in a favourable light. The New Africa-France summit is exemplary of this strategy of cultural and new public diplomacy, with the goal of increasing the soft power of France in Africa. The initial discussion of restitution inside of the French Senate and National Assembly was heated, partially because the government returned some objects without a democratic process.⁵⁶ The report *‘Patrimoine partagé: universalité, restitutions et circulation des œuvres d’art’* by J. Martinez, commissioned by the president, was presented in May 2023 and proposes a doctrine and method for reviewing and processing restitution requests.⁵⁷ The report will serve as a basis for reviewing the French legislative framework. A concrete proposal will be discussed in the French parliament in the coming months.

In Germany, the revelation that Nigeria would not keep the restituted bronzes in public collections but instead return them as the private property of the Oba of Benin, King Ewuare II, was met with shock and called a “fiasco” for the ministers who had been involved in their return to Nigeria.⁵⁸ The German Foreign Ministry reacted by saying that the restitutions had not been bound to conditions but reiterated its “continued wish” for the bronzes to be made available to the public.⁵⁹ It can be argued that the bronzes will only fulfil their diplomatic objective if they are exhibited publicly and thus reach the Nigerian public. The expectation of some members of the public that the objects, as symbols of German benevolence, would still be under the influence of the German state reveals the deeply entrenched paternalistic attitudes towards Nigeria. It also opens questions about the

54 Melissen 2005, 4. “Power over opinion” is a term coined by E. Carr in his seminal book *The Twenty Years’ Crisis. 1919-1939*, first published in 1939.

55 Nye 1990, 196.

56 Perrot 2022, 262.

57 “Shared heritage: universality, restitutions and the circulation of works of art. Towards a French legislation and doctrine on “restitution criteria” for cultural property” (translated by the author).

58 Welt 2023. ▶ <https://www.welt.de/politik/ausland/article245193040/Bericht-Zurueckgegebene-Benin-Bronzen-in-Privatbesitz-gegeben-statt-ausgestellt.html>.

59 Focus 2023, ▶ https://www.focus.de/panorama/kontroverse-um-zurueckgebe-benin-bronzen-jetzt-reagiert-das-auswaertige-amt-auf-das-raubkunst-fiasko_id_193157783.html.

sustainability of the restitution process. While in Germany, no change of legislation was needed to return the objects, as opposed to France, there is no inalienability principle, there is also no legislative process to institutionalise and streamline restitutions.⁶⁰ Restitution processes remain built on bilateral cooperation, which is influenced by geo-strategical considerations.

An important aspect of the effectiveness of soft power is (being perceived as) living up to one's own political values. The German 2021 coalition agreement included colonial heritage objects, a sign of the importance of the subjects for German policymakers. Germany, just like France, went through an intense discussion on restitutions from the '60s to '80s. In 1982, H. Hamm-Brüchner actively tried to promote restitutions in her time at the foreign ministry and projected that the issue of restitutions would become the central question of the following years and one of the main topics of cultural foreign relations.⁶¹ The technical achievements of digitalisation and the opening of archives and catalogues have made it academically feasible to add credibility and force to the question of restitutions. While in 1982 Hamm-Brüchner had to send a letter from Bonn to Berlin to ask for a copy of the catalogue of the colonial collections (it did not exist), research into colonial collections has become much easier since then (albeit not as easy as it should be due to a lack of access and digitalisation).⁶² Savoy and Sarr point out how especially German museums have not catalogued their colonial collections, making the research of which objects to potentially return more difficult to answer. The 2021 German coalition agreement explicitly mentions this, advocating for digitalisation and accessibility of collections.⁶³ With the July 2022 agreement to return ownership of over 1130 Benin Bronzes to Nigeria, Germany is setting a precedent. Nigeria has become the legal owner of the pieces, some will stay in Germany while others will return to Nigeria, where Germany is aiding the financing of a museum.⁶⁴ Considering the staggering number of restituted objects, this precedent will reverberate to the other nations that currently own Benin Bronzes as well as to other sub-Saharan African states.

Germany and France are taking different paths, also due to their

60 Peters 2022, 318-219.

61 Savoy 2021, 165-178.

62 Savoy 2021, 177.

63 Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands, BÜNDNIS 90 / DIE GRÜNEN and Freie Demokraten 2021, 125. See ► <https://www.bundesregierung.de/resource/blob/974430/1990812/1f422c60505b6a88f8f3b3b5b8720bd4/2021-12-10-koav2021-data.pdf?download=1>.

64 Auswärtiges Amt 2022a, 3. See ► <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/blob/2540404/8a42afe8f5d79683391f8188ee9ee016/220701-benin-bronzen-polerkl-data.pdf>.

specific governance structure, to achieve the same aim of increasing their soft power in Africa broadly and former colonies specifically. They use the tools of public diplomacy and cultural diplomacy, and the material objects they are restituting to (sub-Saharan) Africa are their ambassadors. The Martinez report from 2023 called for a Europeanisation of restitutions, indicating that European states should collaborate and formalise restitution processes and principles.⁶⁵ Considering the developments in several other European states, this collaboration and harmonisation is probable.⁶⁶

These developments can also ensure that France, Germany and, through extension, the European Union, develop stronger influence over the region compared to the comparatively inactive United Kingdom. The United Kingdom still holds many pieces of African heritage and despite local interest in receiving the restitutions, the British state has not changed its stance or laws, namely the National Heritage Act or the British Museum Act. These make it impossible for national museums to retribute objects, while several non-state museums have conducted restitutions.⁶⁷ A House of Lords debate in October 2022 showed clearly that there is currently no government appetite to amend or abolish heritage legislature.⁶⁸ Godwin Obaseki, governor of a Nigerian region, raised the point that the British led in colonisation and looting (in the kingdom of Benin) and as such should also take the lead in restitution.⁶⁹ This illustrates the doors that restitution can open, but how refusal to do so can keep them closed as well.

DISCUSSING NEW RELATIONAL ETHICS

The subtitle of the Savoy and Sarr report is “Toward a New Relational Ethics”, revealing their main argument for the necessity of restitutions: to establish new relations, presumably more ethical ones.⁷⁰ A state usually does not act against its own interest (giving away valuable objects). Why, then, do France and Germany seemingly go against their own interest? I have outlined that the return of objects is a means of soft power diplomacy and add to this that cultural diplomacy can move beyond the national interest (keeping valuable objects) if this is perceived to be in the national

65 Martinez 2023, 72-73.

66 See for Austria: Spitra 2022, Belgium: de Clippele/Demarsin 2022, The Netherlands: van Beurden 2022.

67 Bursey 2022, 347.

68 Bursey 2022, 348.

69 The Guardian 2022, ► <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/dec/20/germany-returns-21-benin-bronzes-to-nigeria-amid-frustration-at-britain>.

70 Sarr/Savoy 2018, 2.

interest (better relations with (sub-Saharan) Africa).⁷¹

One of the elements mentioned in the 2022 study on the perception of the EU in Africa is Europe's "complacency deeply rooted in its legacy thinking" and perceived "paternalistic approach" towards Africa.⁷² Policy documents and speeches show that Germany and France expect there to be a change in the relationship with the African countries to which they return objects, potentially hoping to change this perception. In the 2021 German coalition agreement, the restitution of colonial objects is framed as overcoming colonial continuities and the start of a new partnership on eye level.⁷³ Thus, a restitution has strings attached, an expectation. Or, as Mauss would say, it exists in the "atmosphere of [...] obligation and of liberty mixed together."⁷⁴ Considering the changed geostrategic positioning of Africa as elaborated above, as well as the fact that problems such as pandemics or climate change can only be solved through global cooperation, Germany and France have recognised the significance of improving relations with the African continent. They aim to achieve this by overcoming their perception of being "paternalistic" and instead want to be perceived as acting according to their own values. This is echoed in the words of German Foreign Minister Baerbock, who emphasised that, with the return of the objects to Nigeria, Germany is finally facing its colonial history and healing a wound, highlighting that the material objects act as the vehicle of the aim to change the perception of Germany.⁷⁵

C. Scott has found that in previous cases of returns of objects from former coloniser to colonised, when the desire for reconciliation (for example because of geopolitical considerations) had grown, the willingness for returns of the former coloniser increased.⁷⁶ However, she adds, this was only the case if those returns were accepted as gestures of goodwill and not remorse or redress, so not as restitutions.⁷⁷ This dynamic appears not to be true in the case of French and German restitutions today. When framing restitutions as righting historical wrongs and as an ethical act to start a new relationship, the objects returned are more than

71 Ang et al. 2015, 379.

72 Shikwati et al. 2022, 6.

73 Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands, BÜNDNIS 90 / DIE GRÜNEN and Freie Demokraten 2021, 126. See ► <https://www.bundesregierung.de/resource/blob/974430/1990812/1f422c60505b6a88f8f3b3b5b8720bd4/2021-12-10-koav2021-data.pdf?download=1>.

74 Mauss 2016 (1925), 177.

75 Tagesschau 2022, ► <https://www.tagesschau.de/inland/rueckgabe-benin-bronzen-105.html>.

76 Scott 2020, 195.

77 Ibid.

the objects taken. The materials take on new meanings and serve a new purpose for the state returning them and, presumably, for the state receiving them.

According to Bourdieu, any gift receives its meaning from the response it triggers and “[...] if the response is a failure to reply, that retrospectively removes its intended meaning.”⁷⁸ Does this mean that if the restitutions (albeit not gifts as outlined above) do not achieve their desired effect of improved bilateral relations in the short term, they might be halted in the long term? Will the debate about restitutions return to oblivion as it has previously done? How sustainable are the procedures for restitution established in Germany and France?

CONCLUSION

A combination of geopolitical realities, societal change and technological advancements makes restitutions a reality today. Germany and France have both apologised for (parts of) their brutal colonial rule. With restitutions, they aim to follow these words with actions and, in doing so, with much public fanfare. To be seen as establishing an ethical relationship with formerly colonised states is an effective tool of soft power diplomacy. Through the use of public diplomacy, as Macron has done, this effect is increased and reaches civil society, perhaps changing the trend of less and less francophile populations that Sarr and Savoy imply but never get back to.⁷⁹ While I am not arguing that restitutions are not fundamentally the ethical thing to do, there seems to be a disconnect between taking actual responsibility for persisting colonial structures and returning a looted object. In Berlin, there are currently no laws in parliament that would formally institutionalise colonial returns to all countries that make a claim. They will continue to be negotiated for every case on a bilateral basis. This form of negotiation presupposes a request by a formerly colonised nation-state and close collaboration between former colonisers and formerly colonised. A collaboration that ensures continued diplomatic ties and contact. If, based on the French initiative, there is broader European cooperation on restitutions in the future, this would partially translocate the French and German soft power on the European stage but not change the essence of the restituted objects as diplomatic tools.

Following Mauss’ logic, restituted objects take on some of the essence of the state that is giving them back. After years of exile, in the case of the Benin Bronzes around 125 years, they return to their homelands and take on new meanings. This way, looted

⁷⁸ Bourdieu 1993, 5.

⁷⁹ Sarr/Savoy 2018, 30.

objects serve the (former) colonisers a final time, easing relations and making a mutually beneficial bilateral relationship focused on reconciliation possible. France and Germany have found a way to still benefit from their colonial empire, even if it is by disavowing it.

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Digging King Alfred - Representations of Archaeological Artefacts in Alfredian Fanfiction

Martine Mussies

ABSTRACT

This paper addresses the overlooked field regarding representations of archaeological artefacts in modern fanfiction by analysing two exemplary case studies: *The Heredity and Magnanimity of King Alfred* by Freikugels, published in 2020, and *Obietnica* (The Promise) by Obszarska, published in 2021. These two fanfictions feature the early English King Alfred of Wessex (848/849-899 AD) and fit in the traditions of storytelling known as 'Alfredism'. Both stories include descriptions of famous artefacts from the Anglo-Saxon period, such as rings and jewels, that the authors have used to ground their stories in a Neo-Medieval storyworld.¹ The writers' possible sources of inspiration for these stories are examined by building on the frameworks of both medieval and fan studies. This analysis will show how the authors have been inspired by other traditions of storytelling than fanfiction and by online descriptions of archaeological finds. Special focus is put on the descriptions of the presented historical objects. Inspired by existing new scholarship on digital games, I use fanfiction as a lens to look at these objects to gain a new view on a certain period in history. Consequently, these analyses will be used to explore how archaeological narratives are constructed outside academia and what the consequences are in types of historical inaccuracy and narrative manipulation for both scholars and the public. This will also make clear how important it is for archaeologists and historians to keep a critical approach towards the information on historical artefacts that is freely available online.

INTRODUCTION

Modern multimedia has given a new impetus to historical fiction, a

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► [Profile page](#)

¹ In this paper, I use the term 'storyworld' to describe the background, characters, objects, events, citations and actions of one or more narratives within a storytelling that takes place in more than one single form of media.

field in which the histories of Medieval England and Iceland remain a great source of inspiration. This is the case with depictions of King Alfred in popular media, such as the Netflix series 'The Last Kingdom', and the fans re-writing stories to address themes on their personal and political agendas, for example by having the King approve acts of bisexuality.² This paper intends to address this phenomenon through an academic lens by examining two archaeological objects in two fanfictions about King Alfred (848/49-899 AD): an Anglo-Saxon runic ring and the famous Alfred Jewel.

Alfred was king of Wessex and king of the Anglo-Saxons from 871 to 899. He is known for his defence of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms of Southern England against the Danes, which earned him the epithet "the Great". Alfred was the first king of Wessex to call himself the "King of the Anglo-Saxons". According to his Welsh biographer, Bishop Asser and various other historical sources, Alfred was an educated man, who —with his many translations— encouraged education and —with his *Dōmbōc* of c. 893 AD— improved the legal system and the military structure of his kingdom.³ Due to his piety, he is considered a saint in some Catholic traditions, but was never officially canonised.⁴ Ever since the very first writings about him —such as Asser's 893 AD hagiography *Vita Ælfredi regis Angul Saxonum*— Alfred the Great has been used to inspire people as a mirror of the *Zeitgeist* —the defining spirit or mood of the particular period, during which the authors of these publications lived.⁵ This is no different at the beginning of the 21.st century, when Alfred the Great is used in fanfiction, which consists of the fictional writings by fans of, and featuring characters from, particular media. This is a circular development since existing perceptions about Alfred have co-created his image in popular media. Whereas in most traditional text traditions the distinction between authors and readers is crucial, fanfiction blurs these boundaries as various fans often work together on one work of fiction, rewriting each other's work and, thus, acting as ghost-writers for each other.⁶ This dynamic makes the relations of the authors to the text, of the text to the readers and of the authors to the readers more complex. Although published and cited, a text will remain potentially unfinished, so there is no final version, as everyone can add their own

² Mussies 2019.

³ King 2018.

⁴ Taaffe 1907.

⁵ Parker 2007.

⁶ See for example ► <https://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/the-promise-and-potential-of-fan-fiction>

associations. In this way, a new web of meanings emerges.⁷ I argue that the scholars and historians of the Victorian era simply invoked King Alfred to be able to pursue their own polemical and political agendas and that this use of the historical name “King Alfred” as a blank canvas for one's own ideas takes on a whole new dimension in online fanfiction. As such, this use and reuse of a narrative built on a manipulation of the main character (in this case, King Alfred) for political/personal purposes has been brought even further in modern times via online fanfiction, greatly modifying the persona of the King and his history.

As this article will show, not only is the history of King Alfred manipulated from a narratological perspective, but also the ‘biography’ of the archaeological finds is rewritten and modified to fit the fictional contexts. Examining the depiction, (re)imagination, (re)creation, historical evocation and reception of the history of this king and the artefacts associated with him is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it can shed new light on the time during which the text was written, and on the other it informs us about the contemporary treatment of history. This includes historical artefacts from the Anglo-Saxon period, such as an Anglo-Saxon runic ring and the famous Alfred Jewel, that authors of fanfiction use in relation to King Alfred to ground themselves more firmly in the historical context. By referencing these objects or describing them in detail, the authors of fanfiction thus add new layers to the existing storytelling around these objects. By exploring the historical objects surrounding their main characters, authors and readers of fanfiction can learn about history. In this article, I intend to surpass the accuracy/authenticity mire by presenting fanfiction as a lens to look through for gaining a new view on a certain period in history. As far as I know, no research has been done regarding the treatment of archaeological artefacts in fanfiction. To explore how historical heritage is dealt with in modern media, I have drawn inspiration for my methodology and perspective from game studies.⁸

After discussing background information about the historical writing on King Alfred as well as the scholarly research into fanfiction, I will start with a close reading of *The Heredity and Magnanimity of King Alfred* by Freikugels (2020) and its usage of what appears to be an Anglo-Saxon ring. The second close reading will be of *Obietnica (The Promise)* by Obszarska (2021) and the way this work features Anglo-Saxon artefacts related to the famous Alfred Jewel. These analyses will be nuanced and discussed through the lens of the ‘authenticity/accuracy mire’,

⁷ See for example Mussies 2021b.

⁸ Houghton 2018.

inspired by similar scholarship in the realm of Neo-Medieval video games.⁹ With this paper, I hope to provide some insights into how archaeological narratives are constructed outside academia and what the consequences are for both scholars and the public.

ALFRED THE GREAT

Throughout time, King Alfred has been described as the ideal king in the spirit of the time, during which the description was constructed.¹⁰ This kind of storytelling is so remarkable that a new word has been invented for it: B. Yorke has coined the term 'Alfredism' to describe the reputation and public image of King Alfred from the Post-Conquest period, through the Victorian era to the present.¹¹ During and immediately after his lifetime, King Alfred is depicted as brave and loyal or steadfast, learned and wise, selfless, generous, and humble. As such, these descriptions meet all the criteria of Mazee's model of the Anglo-Saxon warrior saint.¹² Historians agree that these depictions are characterised by Alfred's recognition as a national icon and a plethora of literary manifestations describing his great accomplishments.¹³ During the Victorian period, King Alfred was loved by a significant proportion of the British population and many Victorian authors credited him with the foundation of just about everything: from the English nation to trial-by-jury.¹⁴ Notably, Victorian authors described King Alfred as a man of admirable piety, a scholar, and a warrior.¹⁵ The majority of these descriptions are based on the most popular biographies of King Alfred, such as the *Vita Alfredi*, which was compiled by Bishop Asser during Alfred's own lifetime. On the whole, King Alfred has been credited to have staged successful military campaigns against the Vikings, to have instituted legal and institutional reforms in the military, to be frequently involved in judicial hearings and also to be a benevolent ruler.¹⁶ Put succinctly, King Alfred portrayed the perfect or ideal Christian king.

Scholars, such as Yorke, state that these depictions of King Alfred and the appellation conferred to him as 'Great' are hinged on the principles and institutions that the Victorians were deeply concerned with.¹⁷ King Alfred was hailed and famed for his

⁹ For example Houghton 2018.

¹⁰ Bartie et al. 2019; King 2018; Parker 2007; Yorke 2003.

¹¹ Yorke 2017.

¹² Mazee 2016.

¹³ Parker 2007.

¹⁴ King 2018.

¹⁵ Abels 2013.

¹⁶ Horspool 2006.

¹⁷ Yorke 2003.

scholarly diligence, benevolence, military valour, piety and exemplary military leadership, all highly placed Victorian values. Arguably, the development of the cult of King Alfred was based on his supposed embodiment of the aforementioned values, which were deeply embedded in the English past and were integral to English character.¹⁸ The jury is still out on the origins of the cultic reception of him during the Victorian era. However, many scholars contend that the king embodied popular Victorian values. As this paper will show, the 21st century case studies present a very different idealisation of King Alfred of Wessex, but what remains is that they use the idea of him as a blank canvas, on which to project their own ideal image.

AUTHENTICITY AND ACCURACY IN FANFICTION¹⁹

In his paper *The Viking World in Digital Games: Different Layers of Authenticities*, archaeologist T. Schade remarked how often people approached him, asking “how authentic” the Vikings are presented in various examples of modern media, such as the computer game *Assassin's Creed Valhalla* or the TV series *Vikings*. “Somehow there seems to be a need to compare the pop cultural representation with the archaeological record, especially in the context of the longing for authenticity”.²⁰ Schade explained how both these questions are commonly framed in a narrative about historical accuracy, originality or “realness”, but that this perceived authenticity is often more about expectations, experiences and emotions.²¹ This is the case in both the academic world and the public one, as can be noted in fanfiction. The authors and readers of fanfiction often engage in their hobby to virtually wander around in a world that is not their everyday reality. In that sense, their representations of archaeological findings are merely tools to make their virtual worlds more convincing, even more so because the authors are also adapting their work to the readers’ demand. In the two case studies in this paper, the authors have deliberately connected to the world building of the storyworlds of *The Last Kingdom*, a Netflix series based on Bernard Cornwell's book series *Saxon Stories*, that offers an historical interpretation of England in the 9th and 10th centuries AD. As such, the fans do not connect to a reconstruction of their own but rely on a representation of Anglo-Saxon times through the lens of a television series.

¹⁸ Keynes 1999.

¹⁹ The following paragraph is partly based on the chapter “Playing (with) Gisla” (Mussies 2022).

²⁰ As presented at the virtual International Medieval Congress 2021, paper 521-a. Tuesday 6 July 2021: 09.00-10.30.

²¹ Ibid.

Although the research into medievalist fanfiction is still in its infancy, there is a long and ongoing scholarly debate about the authenticity and accuracy of films, series and games that take place against the backdrop of a historical environment.²² Terms such as authenticity and accuracy are sometimes used simultaneously in these debates. The definition of accuracy I am using here can be referred to as the scholarly consensus on historical facts and how these turn up in a game or movie, whereas authenticity is defined as “reliable, accurate representation”, but used more in the context of the look and feel of the setting in its *Zeitgeist*.²³ As the author of fanfiction, by designing and writing a story taking place during the Middle Ages, these two aspects are problematic as you will soon encounter a lack of data, especially when compared to other settings such as games set against the backdrop of the Second World War. Moreover, as explained above, when researching the historical context of King Alfred, much of the data that can be acquired is disputed. In Alfredian fanfiction, historical inaccuracy is inevitable and perhaps even necessary, as there are so many gaps in Early English history, while the fanfiction also has to be balanced and convincing. Authors of fanfiction have to fill in the gaps, so that, when the writing starts, the ‘officially agreed upon history’ ends, which creates opportunities for alternative storylines, including altered meanings and usages of historical artefacts.

As very little about the past is set in stone, my approach is akin to that of R. Houghton who is considering the potential of games to act as “a medium of historical debate”.²⁴ Instead of looking at the authenticity and/or accuracy, I therefore suggest to focus on representation, which is about how convincing a culture is portrayed, which has more to do with contemporary clichés than with historical evidence. As J. Cook explained, as with all games, and, indeed, all screen media—including fan art such as fanfiction—it is hard to balance authenticity to the medium and the genre against authenticity to the period.²⁵ In the words of Houghton, “through the interactive quality of the medium tied to a historically critical approach, players could become not only observers of an output, but participants in the process of historical debate”.²⁶ One of the reflections in this context is the idea that one might attempt an attitude of authenticity towards a historical past, but also towards inherited traditions—even when it is

22 French/Gardner 2020.

23 Varga/Guignon 2020.

24 Houghton 2018, 11.

25 In his talk at the online conference “Kingdom Come: Deliverance and the Aesthetics of Authenticity” on 23th of April 2021, Ludo2021.

26 Houghton 2018, 11.

understood that that tradition is in no way “authentic” to the actual past. In that sense, modern medievalist media offers a playable model of the Medieval, in which creators, audience and scholars can try out new ideas.

TWO EXAMPLES OF HISTORICAL ARTEFACTS IN FANFICTION

As case studies for this article, I have selected two pieces of King Alfred fanfiction that (re)present archaeological objects with contested narratives, meaning different interpretations as to what the objects’ function originally was: an Anglo-Saxon runic ring and the famous Alfred Jewel. The choice of these two as illustrative examples as the basis for a (large corpus of texts considered) fanfic is fourfold. Firstly, these two examples are representative of the online remix culture which encourages derivative works by combining or editing existing materials to produce new creative works. Therefore, these two cases are recognisable examples of the way, in which authors of fanfiction blur the lines between historical evidence (the archaeological objects), historiography (the study of the writing of history), historical fiction (a fictional narrative in a setting related to past events), and historical fantasy (which incorporates fantastic elements such as magic and/or imaginary creatures).²⁷ Secondly, both stories are about objects that might be rather well known from TV documentaries and the like but are not often on display. There is therefore a good chance that the authors have never seen these objects in real life but based their descriptions on pictures on the Internet and representations in other modern media. Thirdly, they are exemplary of the on-going tradition of storytelling around King Alfred, in which he is used as a lens or a pair of spectacles that allows for a new look at that time in a new way. Lastly, I deliberately looked for stories that live a little less on the surface, so not the most popular ones from the biggest websites.

Websites like the Archive of Our Own (a non-profit open-source repository for fanfiction often referred to as AO3) show that the most popular works of fanfiction are generally written in English. Perhaps this is so because English is also the dominant language in ‘canon’, official works, such as the TV series, on which these fanfictions are based on.²⁸ But there are many works in other languages as well. I chose to broaden (‘de-Anglicise’) my research by deliberately adding a case study written in a language other than English (in this case Polish). By doing so, I want to show that this phenomenon is not limited to English-speaking fans. My choice to include a case study in Polish is not entirely coincidental.

²⁷ See also Fulton 2017.

²⁸ Drewniak 2019.

I think that my analysis would benefit from me being able to read the source text myself, and not being dependent on a translation by a third party, as I consider every translation to be an interpretation. After all, a translator always makes choices from various alternatives that are most in line with the translator's perception, so that you read the original through the translator's eyes.

Just like with all fanfictions, the literary quality of the writings on King Alfred greatly varies. In *Theory of Adaptation*, Linda Hutcheon argues that various versions of a story can exist side by side without hierarchical relationships. The adaptations are derived from, or themselves ripped from, or based on or inspired by an earlier work. But that does not make them less interesting in the sense of "derivative or second-rate".²⁹ This is in line with J. Derrida's ideas of texts being archives.³⁰ Following fan studies scholar A. Derecho, fanfiction texts are often described as archontic, as "archives are monuments to the way in which power is reconfigured".³¹ As such, the archontic is opposed to derivative or subordinate.³² As P. Güldenpfennig explains, when viewing fanfiction as archives, one can "see the text as an entry to an open archive with the original artefact as the basis for this same archive".³³ My focus here is on King Alfred fanfiction, sprouted from the Netflix series *Vikings* and *The Last Kingdom*, which adds a new layer to the transmedia storytelling of archaeological narratives.

It is no surprise that most scholars working on fan fiction use examples from Archive of Our Own (AO3), as it is not only the largest and most well-known archive of this kind of writings, but also very easy to browse through.³⁴ However, it is important to realise that the open access fanfiction of AO3 is like the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the entirety of such stories. There is much fanfiction published on less obvious sites (for example on other social media, like Tumblr and Facebook) and on more locally oriented equivalents, like LiveJournal.³⁵ More private works can be found on forums dedicated to specific fandoms, and in diaries and letters shared in private forms of correspondence such as email groups. These less popular fanfics are often to be found through networks of minority groups, such as autism, queer, and/or non-binary support communities existing within larger social media

29 Hutcheon 2012, 169.

30 Derrida/Prenowitz 1995.

31 Vosloo 2005, 383.

32 Derecho 2006.

33 Güldenpfennig 2011.

34 For further details see ►<<https://archiveofourown.org/>>.

35 See ►<<https://livejournal.com/>>.

websites such as Facebook.

THE HEREDITY AND MAGNANIMITY OF KING ALFRED BY FREIKUGELS (2020)

The first case study for this article is the 2020 story *The Heredity and Magnanimity of King Alfred* by a writer under the username of *Freikugels*, that circulated in various online fan groups dedicated to either *The Last Kingdom* or *The Lord of the Rings*.³⁶ *Freikugels'* text consists of a so-called 'mash-up', a term used to indicate a narrative that combines two different storyworlds.³⁷ In this case, *Freikugels* merges King Alfred from *The Last Kingdom* with Aragorn, a fictional character from *The Lord of the Rings*. In her fanfiction featuring Aragorn as King Alfred of Wessex, *Freikugels* writes about "a handsome man", who "wore a chain around his neck, dangling a ring inscribed with the words 'I am Ring'."³⁸ The whole story consists of only one scene, in which an ideal king in disguise sits in the corner of an old Inn, thinking, pondering, singing softly. The king had come to the inn because his beloved works there and he wanted to speak to her. As the title already indicates, at the end of the story passers-by confirm that this ideal king is King Alfred of Wessex, whose heredity and magnanimity are historically recognised or at least attributed to him. But throughout the story, via his thoughts and the short conversation with the female main character —called Merewenna— it becomes clear that many of the indications of his heredity and magnanimity are expressed by means of identity markers and citations of Aragorn, the loyal and introverted ranger, who is destined for the kingship. The parallels are even so explicit that *Freikugels* literally quotes the original Aragorn from *The Lord of the Rings*³⁹. This confirms current research agendas, as the parallelism between Aragorn and King Alfred has rather recently been picked up again by scholars such as A. Gautier and T. Porck.⁴⁰ As such, both fanfiction and scholarly research support the hypothesis that J. R. R. Tolkien (the author of the *Lord of the Rings*) was inspired by King Alfred, when creating the character of Aragorn.⁴¹ Now, it has also found its way to the general public, like for *Freikugels*, the image of the ideal king is Aragorn.⁴²

The archaeological artefact central in this story is "a ring

36 Because fan works mostly circulate in unstable online places, the author authorised the publication of her work at ►<http://martinemussies.nl/web/aragorn-alfred/>.

37 Ganz-Blättler 2012.

38 ►<http://martinemussies.nl/web/aragorn-alfred/>

39 Mussies 2021.

40 The latter on his academic weblog ►<https://thijsporck.com/2016/04/01/aragorn/> .

41 Clausen 1974; Egan 1983; Gautier 2015.

42 Mussies 2021.

inscribed with the words 'I am Ring'" that the King wears around his neck. Freikugels describes the ring as "a plain broad silver ring", so no gems, the only decorative element is the inscription.⁴³ This ring is both a reference to *The Lord of the Rings* and a wink to the Anglo-Saxon finger-rings. Freikugels' work is just one example of the many pieces of Tolkien fanfiction that use an Anglo-Saxon ring as an example of the One Ring. As also noted upon by Arvidsson, Tolkien served as a Rawlinson and Bosworth Professor of Anglo-Saxon (1925-1945), and therefore he must have been very familiar with these rings.⁴⁴ Thus, Freikugels' description of the ring can be regarded as a small addition of *interpretatio mediaevalia*, an expression that can be explained as "the explanation and exploration of Tolkien's work with the help of mediaeval studies".⁴⁵ The author locates her story in the imaginary Middle Ages. At the same time, she offers us a new way of looking at this ring. Moreover, she encourages other fanfiction enthusiasts to virtually search for images of this archaeological artefact to study and compare with the author's description.

The available literature on Anglo-Saxon rings is still scarce and fragmented. As also noted by E. Okasha "[s]ome of these [Anglo-Saxon] rings have had more scholarly attention than others. This may well be because some are more aesthetically pleasing than others, or because some of them have been on display for many years in well-visited museums."⁴⁶ It may be that the same consideration can be applied to the non-academics —such as the teenage fans engaging with fanfiction— or that the academic research has somehow "guided" the choice of the non-academics in deciding, which object to use for their narrative. Objects that are more famous may be chosen more often for both stories and academic research. When an author wants to choose an object to describe, it is helpful if information about the object is already available through other literary or media sources (for example museum websites).

The idea of wearing a special ring as evidence of one's descent resonates with Aragorn's Ring of Barahir. From Freikugels' description, however, it appears that the author was inspired by one of the less-researched rings, the so-called "Wheatley Hill ring", belonging to the chronologically later Anglo-Saxon finger-rings. The Wheatley Hill ring is a gilded silver finger-ring inscribed with runes, that was found in 1993 in Wheatley Hill in county Durham. The Wheatley Hill ring has three circular gem settings on

43 ►<http://martinemussies.nl/web/aragorn-alfred/>

44 Arvidsson 2002.

45 Honegger 2005, 45.

46 Okasha 2003, 31.

the exterior, only one now filled with red glass, that is most probably a later addition. As this item is engraved with the same inscription we find on the ring in the analysed story, it is safe to assume that it likely served as a model.⁴⁷ In Freikugels' story, she imagines the ring without the bling in the context of King Alfred, which fits archaeological research into this ring's history, dating it to the late 8th century AD based on material grounds. Thus, as the Wheatley Hill ring is dated to the 8th century AD and by referring to a similar ring, the author inserted an archaeological element, which would fit with the chronology, while at the same time alluding to Aragorn's Ring of Barahir.

The idea of a ring, that is so powerful that it is best to not wear it on one's finger, is also at the centre of J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* (LOTR). Just like in LOTR, in the narrative by Freikugels the heredity and magnanimity of the king are symbolised in this special piece of jewellery that the traveller wears. The concept of a special —sometimes even magic— ring has captivated people from vastly different parts of the world for centuries. An example that resonates with Freikugels' description is Plato's story about the Ring of Gyges, because whoever owned the ring could become invisible whenever he wants.⁴⁸ It also resonates with the narrative in Norse mythology about the mythical ring Andvaranaut from the hoard of the dragon Fafnir, that could help with finding sources of gold.⁴⁹ Again, we witness how mythology and history blur into each other, which is a main focus of this paper (fanfiction being the mythology, the artefact being the historical object). Similar processes are at work in Medieval Arthurian romance, which bears many parallels with the intertextual storytelling around King Alfred, including Freikugels' story. In *The Knight of the Lion* (a 12th century AD Arthurian romance by Chrétien de Troyes), Sir Yvain is given a magic ring, just like Geraint ab Erbin got in the Mabinogion.⁵⁰ Moreover, rings are commonly observed in Anglo-Saxon literature as royal gifts.⁵¹ For instance in *Beowulf*, the well-known kenning "ring-giver" is usually utilised in regard to a king or overlord. However, it is assumed that the rings mentioned are likely a *béag*, a warrior's arm-ring.⁵² I have not been able to find any evidence of such bracelets or armllets being worn in this context and, therefore, wonder if this is not more of a literary custom from the tradition of heroic tales —one of the many *topoi* that found its way into

⁴⁷ Preserved in the British Museum under number 1995,0902.1.

⁴⁸ Shell 1989.

⁴⁹ Byock 2012.

⁵⁰ Cooke 1989.

⁵¹ Okasha 2003.

⁵² Mesney 2017.



Figure 1.

Reconstruction sketch of the ring used in the fanfiction by Freikugels: "He wore a chain around his neck, dangling a plain broad silver ring inscribed with the words 'I am Ring'." Drawing by the author.

present-day fanfiction. Freikugels' description of a ring worn on "a chain around his neck" might be closer to the historical evidence. Freikugels' writing adds new layers to the traditions mentioned above, that can be valuable to scholars and non-specialists alike. As explained by L. Elleström, "there are clearly no definite borders between narratives formed by dissimilar media types."⁵³ The description of this ring as a finger-ring engraved with an inscription but without any stones is unlike the present state of the ring. In her story, Freikugels paints a picture of the Wheatley Hill Ring, as it might have looked before the gems were added. To show the differences between the archaeological object and its representation in the fanfiction by Freikugels and to visualise the described item, I made a drawing based on this description alone (Figure 1). Most of the surviving rings are engraved with a personal name, but the Wheatley Hill ring is not (figure 2). I have not found any scholarly research about the meaning of the text "I am [named] ring". It might be a riddle, a joke, or a thought experiment. Freikugels' text offers another possibility: she suggests that it is a wink and that the 'ring' is actually a pendant on a chain, instead of worn on a finger, as a ring traditionally should. The story does not tell why, perhaps because of its magical powers —analogous to the folkloristic traditions that culminated in Tolkien's ring— or because King Alfred wanted to remain

⁵³ Elleström 2019, 4.



Figure 2.

The Wheatley Hill ring, image courtesy of the British Museum (https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/H_1995-0902-1).

anonymous and similar to Aragorn's ring, this ring could give away one's identity. In addition to this idea of the ring as a sign of kingship, it can be even interpreted as a symbol of Divine kingship, because in the Bible there is more frequent mentions of a ring as such a symbol, for example in Esther (8:2): "And the king took off his signet ring, which he had taken from Haman, and gave it to Mordecai. And Esther set Mordecai over the house of Haman."⁵⁴ This places the reimagining of King Alfred in the tradition of Alfred as a saint, the successor in the line of David and Jesus. Because of all the narratives that resonate with this work of fan fiction, the story gains depth. Conversely, by presenting this ring on a chain as a marker of kingship, with this story Freikugels adds a new layer of meaning to the intertextual storytelling traditions surrounding the objects we refer to with the word 'ring'.

OBIEŃNICA [THE PROMISE] BY OBSZARSKA (2021)

The second case study presented in this article is the 2021 story "The Promise" by a Polish author under the pseudonym of Obszarska.⁵⁵ This love story between King Alfred and a girl called Elfvige takes place mainly in a library, where Elfvige is learning about the importance of understanding Viking culture and customs for the future of England. As in most romances featuring the King Alfred, his wife Ealhswith is nowhere to be seen —she is not included in the story at all. In this story, the king must say goodbye to his girlfriend, but promises "I will come back for you, I will take you to my castle and you will be queen".⁵⁶ As a sign of his promise he gives her a gift, a large jewel wrapped in a handkerchief. It "took her breath away" as it was the Stone of Alexander the Great. Moreover, King Alfred promises to give her

⁵⁴ English Standard Version Bible, 2016.

⁵⁵ Because fan works mostly circulate in unstable online places, the author has authorised the republication of her work along with rudimentary translation at ►<http://martinemussies.nl/web/the-promise-2021-by-obszarska/>

⁵⁶ Obszarska 2021.

another, similar jewel, upon his return, and that, together, they will look for yet another one, that is decorated with a pattern of spirals of gold wire and blue and red enamel pieces.

A total of three historical artefacts are mentioned in this story: "It was said that whoever had all three jewels enjoyed God's favour and won all battles".⁵⁷ All three are referred to as "jewels" and, as this word is of course ambiguous, it might have a hidden meaning, as this is often the case in romances featuring the King Alfred, for all his "jewels" are per definition "crown jewels" and as such a term to indicate male genitalia.⁵⁸ If so, it might mean that the king and the girl had intercourse before his departure—as in other examples of fanfiction—but this is not necessarily the case.⁵⁹ The number three might have not been a coincidence, as it is essential in many Western storytelling traditions. Biblically, it represents 'divine wholeness', completeness, and perfection, like the three bodies of God in the Hebrew Bible.⁶⁰ But there is also the example of Jesus' three nails to the cross, and the evil trinity of the Devil, the Antichrist, and the False prophet (Revelations 12-13). It is omnipresent in various folktales as well—for example, in elements like the three wishes, three little pigs, three challenges for the hero, three princesses, three rings, etc that are often used as the structure of the story.⁶¹

The first artefact is described as *Kamień Aleksandra Wielkiego*, the Stone/Rock/Gem of Alexander the Great. In my translation: "The stone was beautiful. She turned it in her hand and noticed an indistinct figure carved into it; The Stone of Alexander the Great...—she whispered." From this description of the gift, it becomes clear that it concerns the Alfred Jewel, a well-known 9th century AD Anglo-Saxon artefact that was probably used as the handle of a pointer (figure 3). The jewel consists of a teardrop-shaped enamel insert depicting a man—probably Jesus Christ—and a gold frame that has the appearance of a snout of a fantastic animal, which is generally typical of the so-called 'Barbaric Art'; the influence of the Vikings can be traced here. On the reverse side of the gold lining is an engraved floral ornament, combining Anglo-Saxon and Carolingian styles. The image of Christ is a typically Anglo-Saxon characteristic of the illustrated manuscripts of that period. The objects held by Christ are like plants with long stems, this may be an allegorical depiction of sight as one of the sense organs, as in Fuller's brooch from the same period. It was generally accepted that the figure on this jewel must represent

57 ► <http://martinemussies.nl/web/the-promise-2021-by-obszarska/>

58 The expression is a slang that circulates on social media. See for example ► <http://onlineslangdictionary.com/meaning-definition-of/crown-jewels>

59 Mussies 2021c.

60 Smith 2016.

61 Lüthi 1976.



Figure 3.
The Alfred Jewel,
photograph by *The British*
*Library.*⁶⁷

Christ —for example, as *Maiestas Domini*.⁶² But in 2014, J. Boardman wrote he agrees with a thought by D. Talbot Rice, that the figure on the Alfred Jewel could well be Alexander the Great.⁶³ A connection between these two “Great” men can be found in the so-called *Alexander Romance* that Boardman refers to, which experienced a remarkable popularity in medieval England (as evidenced by the fact that there is even a reference to it in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*).⁶⁴ The scene depicted on the jewel would then be a reference to the idea of knowledge coming through sight, which would be fitting for a pointer. But of course, it is also possible that the interpretation of the artefact depicting Alexander dismisses a link with King Alfred and that the artefact happens to date from his reign, just like the similar Fuller Brooch. However, that seems unlikely, it is logical to link these jewels to royalty, as they must have been extremely expensive.

The second artefact is described as *zielonego Wyrma*, which means “with a green Wyrma”. The term *wyrma* is used to describe a fantastic creature. The Oxford English Dictionary (OED) defines a *wyrma* as a dragon without legs or wings.⁶⁵ More popular online sources define the *wyrma* as a large snake.⁶⁶ The authority of sources like Wikipedia is still not quite established but might give us an indication of the understanding of a term or concept in the

62 Christ in Majesty or Christ in Glory represents the glorious risen Christ, who returns at the end of time, in a cloud of light. See for more information Schiller 1972.

63 Gosden et al. 2014.

64 Boardman 2014.

65 ▶<https://www.oed.com/>; <https://www.wordsense.eu/wyrm/>

66 See for example ▶<https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/wyrm>

67 ▶<https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/alfred-jewel>

vox populi. The general consensus is that the term refers to the earthworm and similar creatures in Medieval English folklore, such as dragons and snakes. Nonetheless, it can be argued that there is no standard definition for the term in fantasy genres. Most Western narratives and myths depict wyrms as long bloodied fire drakes that are flightless.⁶⁸ Two milestones in Anglo-Saxon literature, on which many later works are based, are the Old English Bible and the Old English epic poem *Beowulf*. First, it appears in Psalm 22: "But I am a worm, and not a man: a shame of men, and the contempt of the people".⁶⁹ Within the biblical text Genesis 3:14, in the retelling of the sin, the word 'wurm' makes an unlikely appearance again, as it is implied that this creature (indicated in Hebrew as '*nachash*', and '*leviathan*') had arms and legs that were taken away: "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all cattle, and above all wild animals; upon your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life".⁷⁰ In these two Biblical attestations, the idea of a wurm is used to describe the well-known serpent, who tempts Eve to eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. As such, the serpent has also become a spiritual sign of betrayal and deception. This might be a hint towards the lovemaking of King Alfred and Elfvege. In *Beowulf*, the term wurm is used to indicate a dragon.⁷¹ This is also a topos in fanfiction and might be symbolic of the dangers that the king has to combat in this story.

The third artefact is described as the golden jewel, being decorated with spirals of gold wire:

"And the one with spirals of gold wire?", she asked, fascinated by the legend of the jewels more than by the desire for wealth. 'And the golden one we will find together', said the king, kissed her tenderly and went out into the darkness of the night."⁷²

In these short descriptions, there are no elements apart from the decoration, which might be indicative. However, based on the little information the author offers and the knowledge that the other two jewels were based on online descriptions of archaeological artefacts, it is plausible that this description of the third jewel is inspired by the Borg Aestel (figure 4).⁷³ This artefact is indeed decorated with a pattern of spirals of gold wire and was probably used as the handler of a pointer, the same type as the Alfred jewel. The item was found among the ruins of a Viking Era

68 Flanagan 2017.

69 *Ic eam wyrme gelicra ðonne men, for þam ic eom worden mannum to leahrunge and to forsewennesse, and ic eom ut aworpen fram him of heora gesomnunga swa þer wurm.* Geneva Bible.

70 Revised Standard Version Bible.

71 Wanner 1999.

72 Obszarska 2021.

73 The author would like to thank Marion Fjelde Larsen, Hege Anita Eilertsen and Madelen Berg Hansen from Museum Nord for sharing this picture as well as their knowledge of this artefact.



Figure 4.
The Borg Aestel
(photographed by Kjell Ove Storvik).

Chieftain Hall at Borg (Norway) and it was most likely Viking loot.⁷⁴

However, in the context of this paper, it might be worth noting that there is a scholarly connection between this artefact and King Alfred. A powerful trader called Ottar, who was native to the Lofoten Islands (on which Borg is located), has been known to visit King Alfred. Therefore, various scholars have suggested that Ottar got the Borg Aestel from Alfred, in some way or another.⁷⁵

DISCUSSION

The two case studies discussed in this paper create a new story on previous instances from the ongoing intermedial storytelling around King Alfred. Through their mash-ups and other collage techniques, they mix elements from history books and

⁷⁴ Webster 2021.

⁷⁵ Yorke 2008.

encyclopaedias with ideas from contemporary fantasy, such as the books by J.R.R. Tolkien and the TV series *The Last Kingdom*. They do this in order to create an emotionally compelling story, set in a recognisable universe, that meets the expectations of their fellow fans and connects with their previous experiences in the storyworld. As such, the authors of fanfiction are storytellers, who can fill the gaps in history. With their medievalisms and 'evocations' they are 'rewriting' the stories, in which the character of King Alfred keeps getting manipulated over time, even in new media. Consequently, their works are located in the overlapping spaces of evidence, history, historical fiction and historical fantasy. This has implications for their treatment of historical artefacts. The first case study is exceptionally layered in its description of the artefact and the symbolic meanings it might have had. *The Heredity and Magnanimity of King Alfred* of Freikugels describes a ring that the king wears around his neck. This ring resonates with folklore about magic rings and with Tolkien's idea of The One Ring to Rule Them All. There is also a clear reference to Anglo-Saxon rings from archaeological excavations, in particular the Wheatley Hill ring. In her fanfiction, the author describes an earlier state of being of this historical artefact. The second case study —*Obietnica* [The Promise] by Obszarska— is more straightforward. All descriptions of the artefacts in this piece of fanfiction are easily traced to the descriptions of the Alfred Jewel on Wikipedia, including the inscription "aelfred mec heht gewyrca", meaning "Alfred ordered me made".⁷⁶ Thus, by copying well-known online sources, the story by Obszarska offers a fairly well-researched description of the historical artefacts in question.

The findings from these analyses of the two case studies have a number of implications, of which I would like to highlight two. My main point is that the scholarship of Alfredian fanfiction provides us with an extra layer to 'Alfredism', the intertextual storytelling around King Alfred. Through the link with fanfiction, a better and deeper understanding emerges of how the old narrative created around King Alfred has indirectly influenced the development of the modern narrative. This manipulation of history takes great liberty in creating a new plot for this character, but at the same time tries to establish a 'historical' ground by inserting archaeological artefacts. This gives new angles for fandom research, which will have to show, whether these trends also apply in other (non-Alfredian) fanfiction, and for archaeological research, which can explore the alternative uses and developments of the artefacts offered by the authors of fanfiction. As such, fanfiction can be analysed to add a new look to current

⁷⁶ For further details see ►<<https://en.wikipedia.org>>.

academic research. Where research stops because no more proof can be found, creative thinking can help bring research regarding a specific object in a certain new direction, and thus offer a new impulse.

In addition, the analysis of fanfiction might teach academics something about the dissemination of cultural knowledge in non-academic contexts, namely through the Internet and especially through websites such as Wikipedia. There are repercussions in terms of the preservation of accurate knowledge, because the literal descriptions (including any sloppiness and inaccuracy) of an article on Wikipedia thus easily find their way into fanfiction, which is taken for granted by readers. The lack of authenticity is indeed part of this fictional world, but it is the literal sentences uttered by the characters that are at issue, not descriptions of historical artefacts.⁷⁷

CONCLUSION

Fanfiction is an ever-thriving genre and offers us a number of diverse literary works, often praised by the public and sometimes frowned upon by scholars.⁷⁸ These historical fantasies, however, might offer possibilities for collaborations. Where research stops because no more proof can be found, creative thinking can help to bring the research to a specific object in a certain new direction, thus giving it a new impulse. Fanfictions emerge from and are circulated within reading communities that are passionately involved with their source texts, which can flourish under a new light through the influx of such works. In spite of its many controversial faces, fanfiction opens a new path we can utilise in our herculean effort to comprehend the life and lifetime of King Alfred.

Through these postmodern historical evocations, we can open up new possibilities in research. Akin to historical video games, the fanfiction written in the context of King Alfred is therefore not just a representation of selected (pseudo) historical data and analysis, but can instead be used as a toolbox to explore and interrogate the information and arguments presented, an addition to the fields of archaeology and, in this case, medieval studies.⁷⁹ In line with the argument of Houghton about video games, fanfiction also offers its writers and readers a playable model of the Middle Ages, as well as a creative way of offering heritage to new audiences, while giving scholars new perspectives on known and lesser-known archaeological artefacts. As such, the existing

⁷⁷ Dalby 2009.

⁷⁸ Although I would not suggest putting every scholar in the same corner here, just like scholars should not put every writer of fanfiction in the corner of a spreader of false information.

⁷⁹ A game scholar with a similar approach is Espen Aarseth.

dialogues between scientific research and fan fiction about archaeological finds can not only generate more attention for the objects themselves (which in turn may lead to more funding and more research), but also contribute to scholarly research. Fanfiction can provide new data to academic research by exploring alternative uses and raising new questions. The case studies discussed here are exemplary of the continuing 'fanfiction tradition' of narratives around King Alfred, in which the king is used as a mirror of the *Zeitgeist*, during which the authors lived. By analysing these two case studies, I have shown how traces of archaeological research find their way into online fanfiction about King Alfred. Follow-up research will have to show whether this is also the case for other rulers with other artefacts that are featured in other fanfiction.

As a temporary conclusion of this research project, I would like to cite a line from French theorist M. de Certeau: "Far from being writers – founders of their own place, heirs of the peasants of earlier ages now working on the soil of language, diggers of wells and builders of houses – readers are travellers; they move across lands belonging to someone else, like nomads poaching their way across fields they did not write".⁸⁰ This allusion, enriched in H. Jenkins' 1992 *Textual Poachers*, puts a particular emphasis on the "poachers", marauding readers, and, more broadly, fanfiction writers, who satisfy their thirst not with gold, but with words and ideas.⁸¹

80 Certeau 2011, 174.

81 Jenkins 2012

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▶ <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2020/entries/authenticity/> accessed on 23/11/2021.

Digging King Alfred: A Response

Dr. Mar Guerrero-Pico

In her article, M. Mussies examines the depiction, reimagination and reception of historical figures and objects in fanfiction. By fittingly using the figure of Alfred, King of Wessex and the Anglo-Saxons in the 9th century as case study—or may I say a ‘prompt’ to stick to fanfiction vernacular? — and applying a close textual analysis on two Alfredian fics, the author contributes to a growing body of research on fanfiction in general, but still limited when it comes to fan representations of historical personalities, facts, or artefacts.¹ In this sense, Mussies’ contribution is a stimulating endeavour that paves the way for more scholarly work on a practice that, as I explain in this response, has critical implications for both historical literacy and cultural representation.

In a seasoned and ever-participatory landscape of transmedia convergence, where stories circulate beyond media and genre constraints and anyone can produce, remix, and share their own messages, fanfiction based on historical figures does not certainly come off as an outlandish occurrence.² In fact, if we look at the ‘Historical RPF’ tag on ArchiveOfOurOwn.com, the fanfic archive from which Mussies has unearthed the Alfredian stories reviewed in her essay, more than 12,600 *historical real-person fanfics* populate the tag.³ Again, not a shock given the loyal following that the RPF subgenre—featuring celebrities or public figures as characters in the stories—has among fans worldwide. Therefore, if Jimin from the band BTS or Taylor Swift, both transmedia brands with narrative universes of their own, can be reappropriated as

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1 *Fic* and *fanfic* are alternative abbreviated forms to refer to fanfiction, especially, when addressing specific texts of the genre.

2 Jenkins defines convergence as a triple-faceted process that entails “the flow of contents across multiple media platforms, the cooperation between multimedia industries, and the migratory behavior of media audiences who will go almost anywhere in search of the kinds of entertainment experiences they want” (2006, 2). Specifically, the term transmedia is related to the expansion of contents through different media platforms by both the authors or owners of an intellectual property, and their consumers (Jenkins et al., 2013, 161-178).

3 The initials RPF stand for Real Person Fiction. For further details see ► <https://archiveofourown.org/tags/Historical%20RPF/works>.

muses for fan fiction writing, why can it not be the case for medieval rulers or leaders? If anything, these antique protagonists pose a greater challenge to fan writers, who want to keep it as canon as possible.

HISTORICAL FORENSIC FANDOM

As remarked by Mussies, the concepts of accuracy and authenticity are central to historical research, as historians and archaeologists strive to meticulously reconstruct past events, individuals, and artifacts. Similarly, in fan communities or fandoms, the idea of a 'canon' is an important concept, as fans seek to maintain a sense of 'fidelity' to the narrative universe or source material they are passionate about. While the worlds of historical research and fandom may seem disparate, there are meaningful similarities between the ways, in which accuracy and authenticity are evaluated in historical research, and the ways, in which fans consider canon. In fan communities, the idea of canon refers to the 'official' or authoritative version of the story as established by the original creators—or celebrities for RPF. For fans, maintaining the integrity of canon is important because it helps to maintain a sense of continuity and consistency within the storyworld, or in relation to the characters' defining identity traits.⁴ So, just as historical researchers strive for accuracy and authenticity in their representations of the past, fans also seek these standards in the way that their favourite stories and characters are portrayed, regardless of whether they are positioning the characters in a more or less canonical alternate universe or not, as I have shown elsewhere.⁵

However, what is often synchronous research, with the *history/canon* of the famous person developing in real time and within click's reach, becomes asynchronous when it comes to digging into the distant historical past, often resorting to increasingly scattered, unreliable secondary sources as we push back in time. Whatever the starting point is, historians, archaeologists and fan writers go about their business as if they were investigators trying to fill the gaps. In this sense, the concept of 'forensic fandom' coined by J. Mittell cannot be more adequate to illustrate my point. In his work about contemporary television culture, he presents this idea as the phenomenon of fans closely and collectively analysing and dissecting the details of their favourite television shows in online communities.⁶ An inquisitive and collaborative approach to the subject matter, and a reconstructive

4 Guerrero-Pico 2015.

5 Guerrero-Pico 2016.

6 Mittell 2015.

aim, prevail for both historians and fan writers.

Mittell argues that this type of fan engagement offers important insights into the way audiences understand and make meaning from complex narratives. Considering Mussies's work, such semiotic process could also extend to historical events, objects and characters, elements of another kind of complex narrative that has experimented comparable interpretations through time. This lasting impression of some historical interpretations on the social imaginary is visible in King Alfred's set of virtues being transferred from the Middle Ages to the Victorian era to promote the predominant national values at the time. An analogous commentary can be made about the figure of Queen Isabella of Castile (1451-1501), whose papal byname, the Catholic, aligns with historical biographical notes describing a hardworking, wise, collected, and devout character. Such qualities were highly regarded as a model of femininity by the national-catholic propaganda of General Franco's dictatorship in Spain between 1939 and 1975, but somewhat still accompany contemporary approaches on the figure of the monarch. In the last few years, the Spanish television industry, especially public service broadcasters, has ventured into the country's past seeking inspiration for its fiction programming. In this context, TV series such as RTVE's *Isabel*, *Carlos, rey emperador* and *El Ministerio del Tiempo* serve as entry points to specific takes on the past.⁷ For instance, Isabel's first season heavily draws on Castilian fifteenth-century chronicles and documents to contest the hagiographical perspectives on the sovereign, portraying a headstrong and independent leader, chiefly in her early years on the throne.⁸

TRANSMEDIA 'FANON' AS HYPOTEXT AND HISTORICAL GATEKEEPING

Drawing on G. Genette's narrative theory, we can argue that same way Freikugels and Obszarska have based their productions on *The Last Kingdom* and *Vikings*, Isabel fan creators have expanded plots and developed new situations drawing on such televisual hypertext from the historical hypotext or source text.⁹ In other words, their canon is not built on historical archives, or formal education, but already speculative, derivative work that tries to reimagine what has been lost in the course of time. As shown by recent studies on video games and TV series, learning about the past has turned inevitably mediatised.¹⁰ Therefore, and mirroring other media

7 Translated into English as Isabella. Translated into English as Charles, Emperor King. Translated into English as The Ministry of Time.

8 Queen Isabella of Castile's reign spanned a total of thirty years, from 1474 until her death in 1504.

9 Establés/Guerrero-Pico 2016; Genette 1997.

10 Burgess/Jones 2022; Gambarato/Heuman 2022, Venegas 2022.

productions set in the past (e.g., the *Assassin's Creed* video game series featuring both historical and fictional elements), historical fan fiction establishes at best *contextualised alternative universes*, typically retaining elements of the original source text, but transforming specific aspects, such as the background, character relationships, or settings in order to explore issues close to the author's personal life and outlook.¹¹ The changes made to the original are grounded in the existing context and are often motivated by a desire to explore a particular aspect in greater depth. And when one of these fan reinterpretations and rewritings—not necessarily rooted in canon—is sanctioned by the community and repeated pervasively through other fan-made texts, then, it becomes the *fanon*, or hypotext, that powers a shared universe or intertextual tradition in a fan community.¹² For example, Freikugels' diegetic transposition resulting in the characters' crossover between *The Lord of the Rings'* Aragorn and the King Alfred featured in *The Last Kingdom* could supply other fans with replicable prompts to play and speculate on.¹³

As Mussies suggests, the author detected common identity markers (e.g., heredity, magnanimity and, I would add, humility) between Aragorn and King Alfred that facilitated their narrative merge. In this vein, Paolo Bertetti's extensive research on the identity variations of transmedia characters is an excellent framework to explore how the Anglo-Saxon-inspired ring featured in the fanfic plays a central role in the 'figurative identity' of both characters (i.e., the appearance and names that set them apart) and how this translates to their 'thematic identity', that is, to the role they play as kings in the story.¹⁴

From what transpires from Mussies's analysis on Obszarska's fanfic, we can agree that historical fanfiction writers engage in an archival quest to enrich and add detail to the background they aim to describe, most notably when specific artefacts intervene in the narrative being told. When this is done well, it implies a set of skills to select, verify, summarise and effectively apply historical sources to their transformative works.¹⁵ And the same abilities also come in handy when the purpose is verification. Going back to Isabel,

11 Guerrero-Pico 2016, 82.

12 Kirby 2002; Busse/Hellekson 2006.

13 Transformation that impacts the diegesis ("the world wherein the story occurs") presented by a hypotext; therefore, basic aspects of the story may change, such as its original "spatiotemporal framework" and character's nationalities, genders or sociocultural background. At the same time, these kinds of diegetic conversions can also modify the action that occurs in the hypotext (Genette, 1997, 294–296).

14 Bertetti 2014.

15 Coppa/Tushnet 2017.

and moving away from fanfiction for a moment, *isabelinos* —as the fans of the series are known— produce GIFs with scenes subbed in English to broaden their reach and peak international fans' interest in this part of Spanish history. Likewise, these fan translators would translate peace treaties and personal correspondence and juxtapose them with remixed images from the series. The reason for this practice is fact-checking the series events that do not adhere to historical documentary sources. In addition, fans would also create timelines including landmark events, and dates of birth and death of the historical characters.¹⁶ Parallel to transformative fan approaches to history, such as fanfiction, a case should also be made for fan-driven historical gatekeeping with an educational goal.

FOSTERING HISTORICAL LITERACY THROUGH FAN FICTION

This brief remark on the latent skills that fans exert when writing fanfiction based on historical figures, events and artefacts makes me wonder about the implications of this practice for the improvement of historical literacy and cultural representation, especially among the youth, which I believe supplements the two points provided by Mussies in her discussion. Let me conclude this response by shedding some light on reasons why fanfiction is a valuable tool to foster education on history in both, formal and informal learning environments.¹⁷ First, as suggested above, creating fiction about the past requires a certain level of competence, which includes knowledge of the historical context and culture of the period, during which the elements of the narrative are set. This can improve familiarity with the subject matter and help writers to understand the complexities and nuances of the historical era they are depicting.

Furthermore, the process of writing historical fanfiction requires extensive research. Engaging in research can lead fan writers to develop critical thinking skills, as they learn to distinguish between credible sources and mis/disinformation. Additionally, research can assist authors to better comprehend the *Zeitgeist* they are writing about as well as the motivations, actions, and experiences of the historical figures, not only allowing authors to more accurate and authentically portray historical characters in their fanfics, but to do so in a more ethical manner.

Besides historical knowledge and research skills, writing this kind of fanfiction can also help authors to develop creative writing skills, such as characterisation, dialogue, and plot development. This also applies for experimentation with different writing styles,

¹⁶ Establés/Guerrero-Pico 2016, 66.

¹⁷ Black 2008; Scolari et al. 2018; Rouse 2021.

techniques, and structures, which enables fans to explore the creative possibilities of writing about the past and projecting possible worlds onto it.¹⁸ The aim here is to develop a greater appreciation for the source material, and to reflect on its cultural and historical significance.

Finally, writing historical fan fiction requires an awareness of the way, in which historical figures and events are represented and interpreted in different contexts and time periods. Thus, fan writers may equip themselves with a critical lens through which they can evaluate historical representation and consider how different perspectives and interpretations shape our understanding of history.

¹⁸ Eco1979.

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Response “Digging King Alfred”

Martine Mussies

In the dialogue paper of the previous issue of *Kleos* (issue 5), A. S. Poulsen posits that although the use of video games as a means of conveying archaeological knowledge may not be an immediately apparent strategy, in recent times, an increasing number of scholars and cultural institutions have come to acknowledge the benefits that video games can provide in terms of depicting historical contexts. By utilising video games as an innovative and interactive medium for learning, archaeological information can be presented in a dynamic and engaging manner, which can help foster a deeper understanding and appreciation of the past.¹ Poulsen illustrates their point by the creation of some unique maps within the program *Minecraft Education Edition*. In their response to this paper in the same issue 5, Dr. C. E. Ariese explains that there exists a substantial body of research that delves into the advantages and disadvantages of utilising video games as a tool for learning and formal education. Due to the extensive scope of this research, it is difficult to summarise its findings in a concise manner. Nonetheless, such investigations have provided valuable insights into the potential benefits of video games as an educational medium, as well as the potential challenges that may arise in their use. By exploring these issues, researchers and educators can gain a more nuanced understanding of how to most effectively leverage video games in the service of learning and pedagogy.² In the dialogue paper of the current issue of *Kleos*, a surprisingly similar subject is discussed but concerning a different kind of means to engage with the audience. In my initial argument, I addressed the representations of archaeological artefacts in fanfiction concerning King Alfred of Wessex. As I explained, my approach is akin to that of R. Houghton who considers the potential of games to act as “[...] a medium of historical debate”.³ A thought-provoking response to it was

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¹ Poulsen 2022, 75.

² Poulsen 2022, 93.

³ Houghton 2018, 11.

written by Dr. Guerrero Pico. This short paper will reflect on her response.

Dr. Guerrero Pico highlights the concept of 'forensic fandom', a term coined by J. Mittell in 2015, to explain how the investigation into the history of famous individuals can differ depending on the examined era.⁴ When delving into the distant past, such studies can become asynchronous due to the scarcity of primary sources, resulting in a greater reliance on secondary sources that may be scattered and unreliable. This can create challenges for researchers seeking to build an accurate understanding of historical events and figures, requiring careful consideration of the available evidence and its potential biases. I could not agree more and would like to add two thoughts. Firstly, when considering historical reimaginings as a lens through which to view a particular period in history, I hope to surpass the accuracy/authenticity mire by shifting my focus to representation. Rather than striving for a technically precise recreation of the past, I believe that it is important to prioritise the portrayal of cultures in a convincing manner. By emphasising representation, I aim to present a fresh perspective on history that is respectful of the historical sources yet acknowledges the interpretive nature of any attempt to recreate the past. This approach recognises that historical reimaginings are inherently subjective and that they cannot be a perfect reflection of the past. Therefore, my goal is to offer a nuanced and engaging depiction of history that highlights the cultural richness and lived experience of the period being depicted. By adopting this approach, I hope to demonstrate that historical reimaginings like fanfiction can provide a compelling and thought-provoking way of engaging with the past. By embracing the potential for creative interpretation and imaginative exploration, fanfiction offers a new and compelling way of understanding the history of different cultures and societies. My second point concerning the searchable, outdated research in fan communities serve as a compelling reminder of the need for archaeologists and historians to maintain a critical approach towards the historical information that is available online. I believe that a good example of a step in this direction is the 2019 Wikipedia workshop that was held at the International Medieval Congress in Leeds.⁵ This workshop provided an excellent illustration of the importance of ensuring that online information about history is accurate, well-researched, and up to date. By facilitating the contribution of scholars' knowledge and expertise

⁴ Mittell 2015.

⁵ '#MedievalWiki: Editing Women in Wikipedia' was organised by Dr. Victoria Leonard and Sukanya Rai-Sharma and delivered by Dr. Kate Cook.

to Wikipedia, the workshop serves as a powerful platform for promoting a critical approach towards historical artefacts and their representation online. I should note, however, that it is also important to recognise the labour involved in editing Wikipedia entries. While the platform offers a valuable means of disseminating information to a broad audience, the work of editing and updating articles is significant and demands a considerable investment of time and effort. As such, any attempts to promote critical engagement with historical artefacts online must also take into account the labour issues involved in these efforts and strive to distribute the labour fairly.

Dr. Guerrero Pico draws a very interesting parallel between the 'Alfredism' I discussed and the multimedial *Nachlebens* of Queen Isabella of Castile (1451-1501 AD). She mentions the GIF sets created by the 'isabelinos', who sometimes act as historical gatekeepers. GIF sets are collections of animated images, typically created using a series of still images or short video clips.⁶ These GIFs can be used to create visual narratives or to highlight specific aspects of a particular theme, such as a TV show or movie. Dr. Guerrero Pico makes a compelling case for this fan-driven historical gatekeeping with an educational goal. Further research will reveal to which extent this is also applicable to the realms of Alfredian fan communities, for example on sites that allow for GIF set sharing, such as Tumblr. Fans of King Alfred, an Anglo-Saxon historical figure, often create and use GIF sets to express their interest and enthusiasm for Anglo-Saxon England. These GIFs might include scenes from historical dramas or depictions of artefacts and objects, such as illuminated manuscripts or Anglo-Saxon jewellery. By creating and sharing these animated images, fans can engage with the history of King Alfred and his time in a visual and dynamic way as well as with a broader community of enthusiasts. Furthermore, GIF sets can help to bring the past to life and create a more immersive experience for those interested in the period, providing a window into the sights, sounds, and culture of Anglo-Saxon England.

Adding to the comparison between Aragorn, the main character in *The Lord of the Rings*, and the many representations of King Alfred, Dr. Guerrero Pico suggests a third common identity marker (next to heredity and magnanimity) shared by both: humility. This offers a very interesting angle because it is precisely King Alfred's modesty and humility that is a non-constant factor in his representations online. Indeed, likely influenced by the book series *The Saxon Stories* and the Netflix series *The Last Kingdom*, which was based on these book series, King Alfred is alternately

6 ► <https://historiasenlacorte.tumblr.com/post/109976479518/moradometalizado-isabel-2x04>

portrayed in this respect. Sometimes he is shown as the devout and thereby humble Christian king, in line with ideas about biblical kingship that we also see in the intertextual storytelling around King David and around the "King of the Jew", Jesus himself.⁷ Other times, he is stubborn and haughty pedantic. Time will tell which of these two seemingly contradictory portrayals of King Alfred will ultimately be most endorsed by the fan community and end up in the "fanon", defined by Dr. Guerrero Pico as the "hypotext, that powers a shared universe or intertextual tradition in a fan community".⁸ Moreover, Dr. Guerrero Pico suggests an excellent framework for identity variations, by P. Bertetti.⁹ Although these ideas were initially formed to analyse the "fictional hero", they might well help explain how the 'figurative identity' of King Alfred translates into his 'thematic identity'.

The importance of fanfiction for non-academic purposes can be exemplified by a personal narrative that depicts a 15-year-old French girl's experience with depression and how writing fanfiction has helped her cope with her mental health struggles.¹⁰ The narrative highlights the subjective experience of depression in adolescence, including feelings of sadness, hopelessness and a loss of interest in activities. Furthermore, the author's reluctance to discuss her depression with friends and family highlights the stigma surrounding mental health issues in adolescence. The narrative suggests that writing fanfiction can be a protective coping mechanism for depression. It enables the author to escape the real world and create a world of her own, which can help regulate negative emotions and enhance feelings of control. The author's self-expression through writing fanfiction aligns with previous research, which has shown that expressive writing can be an effective way to cope with stressful experiences. Additionally, the narrative emphasises the importance of social support in mental health coping. The author mentions connecting with other fans, who enjoy the same TV shows and books, which has provided her with a sense of community and belonging. Social support has been shown to be an important factor in promoting mental health and buffering against the negative effects of stress. Overall, this personal narrative provides insight into the potential of creative expression and social support as coping mechanisms for depression in adolescence. Further research could investigate the effectiveness of this coping mechanism. For example, a study

⁷ Mussies 2023.

⁸ Busse/Hellekson 2006; Guerrero Pico 2023, p.3; Kirby 2022.

⁹ Bertetti 2014.

¹⁰ Republished with the author's permission at my website: <http://martinmussies.nl/web/writing-fanfiction-to-cope-with-mental-health-issues/>.

could investigate the impact of positive mental health representation in historical fanfiction and other forms of media on individuals, who are struggling with mental health issues, and/or compare the mental health outcomes of adolescents, who write historical fanfiction, to those who engage in other forms of creative expression, such as drawing or playing music.

To conclude, Dr. Guerrero Pico adds some valuable points regarding how writing fanfiction about historical events can be helpful for learning about history. When individuals engage in the writing of fanfiction that involves historical events or figures, it is essential for them to conduct some form of research of the time period in question. Through this process of inquiry, fanfiction writers can gain a more nuanced understanding of the cultural, political, and social context, in which their chosen subject lived and operated. This, in turn, can lend greater credibility and authenticity to their creative work, potentially making it more engaging and enjoyable for readers. Historical fanfiction can help readers and writers think critically about different sources of information and learn to tell what is true and what is not. Writing fanfiction can also help people practise their creative writing skills, like making interesting characters and stories. It can also help them think about how different people might see history in different ways. As such, writing historical fanfiction can be a fun way to learn about history, practice writing skills and think about different perspectives on historical events.

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Interdisciplinarity and Archaeology: A Review of the 2022 ARCHON Day. Rijksdienst voor het Cultureel Erfgoed, Amersfoort. October 28, 2022.

Thomas Hijzen

INTRODUCTION

For as long as it has existed, archaeology has been an interdisciplinary field. Historians and earth scientists alike have held close ties to archaeology. Furthermore, with the increasingly accepted social value of archaeology in the eyes of the public, the field is continuously developing new ways of working with other disciplines. For researchers themselves, this raises the question of what archaeology is and where it stands in relation to other disciplines. The uncertainty regarding archaeology's position is seen as one of the 'Grand Challenges' of the discipline.

The ARCHON Day is a yearly event, in which archaeologists discuss a topical subject within archaeology. Organised by ARCHON, the Dutch research school of archaeology, the conference brings together graduate students, researchers, and commercial archaeologists in academic debates. The 2022 ARCHON Day, held on October 28th 2022 at the State Service for Cultural Heritage in Amersfoort, was centred around the concept of interdisciplinary archaeology. It dealt with the contribution of archaeologists working together with other fields of science. The main question was how synergy can be ensured and what is needed to work in an interdisciplinary environment. Through a lecture, a set of poster presentations, three workshops and finally a panel discussion, archaeologists in various stages of their career were able to discuss these themes. In this review, I summarise the contents of the conference and critically reflect on the results it yielded.

INTERDISCIPLINARY COLLABORATIONS

After an introduction by [Dr. Philip Verhagen](#), the scientific director of ARCHON and Assistant Professor at the Vrije Universiteit (VU,

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► [Profile page](#)

1 Halpern 1998, 60.

2 Kajda et al. 2018, 97, 103.

3 Kerr 2020, 1338.

Amsterdam), the first lecture was given on the main theme of the conference. Dr. Jason Laffoon from Leiden University took the stage to talk about interdisciplinary collaboration. He began by explaining the framework in which we, as archaeologists, are working. This framework consists of divisions between disciplines, most notably between the social sciences, natural sciences, and humanities, that developed in the 19th century. This system often leads to a lack of cooperation and a high degree of self-sorting in scientific fields, which hampers interdisciplinary projects, including in archaeology.

Furthermore, the division of disciplines across faculties, and archaeology in particular, is quite ambiguous. In the North American educational systems, for example, archaeology is seen as a field in anthropology, whereas Dutch universities place it in the arts, in the humanities or completely separate. As Laffoon explained, this cannot be blamed on the arrival of 'new' sub-disciplines such as archaeological sciences. It was consequently shown that archaeological sciences and many of the tools often employed in it are already more than 40 years old. This includes techniques that are often perceived as new such as GIS or 3D modelling.

In the light of these issues, Laffoon found the main challenges of interdisciplinary archaeology to be the lack of interaction, self-sorting between disciplines, the use of jargon, the academic structure and funding bodies. In the concluding remarks, several proposals on how to fix these issues were given. The ideas included the creation of incentives for interdisciplinary work, to stay curious, to get out of your comfort zone, to make the implicit explicit and to be in charge of your results. By taking these steps, archaeologists – as individuals – can contribute to a better environment for interdisciplinary work. As such, this presentation and the discussion it sparked formed an excellent start of the 2022 ARCHON Day, as it clearly demarcated the issues of interdisciplinarity, whilst offering a clear view on what to do in order to move forward.

DISCUSSING THE FUTURE

Following this introduction, the rest of the day consisted of three workshops, multiple poster presentations during the breaks and a panel discussion at the end of the day, in which the findings of the day were critically summarised. The poster sessions were set up in the main hall and were an excellent forum for (r)MA and PhD students to talk about their research. As such, this session formed a nice platform for conversation with other students from various Dutch institutions about their work. All attendees could vote on their favourite poster. Lotte Nagelhout (Leiden University)



Figure 1.
*Dr. Philip Verhagen
welcoming the attendees to
the 2022 ARCHON Day
(created by Yannic Rabou).*

received this award for her poster on mercury as a syphilis treatment in the Medieval Netherlands. It was then time for the workshops. These were set up so that every attendee could attend each of the three workshops, which allowed everyone to work on the full scope of topics.

The first workshop dealt with interdisciplinary fieldwork and was chaired by **Professor Dr. Bleda Düring** (Leiden University). This workshop took an open approach. The participants were asked to sit in a circle and discuss their experiences with fieldwork and which steps they would take to facilitate proper interdisciplinary research. It was noted that archaeology is quickly becoming more technical, with new scientific tools being employed regularly. The increasing number of applications of 3D modelling and of remote sensing techniques were mentioned. With this development, the discussion group agreed that it is necessary that specialists on these techniques be involved, who voice their opinions, as they are the ones who understand the possibilities and limitations of certain approaches. This means that there is the need for open communication. It was also brought up that these techniques are often employed when it is not necessary. The attendees of this workshop concluded that techniques and methods should be set up to answer specific research questions. It was noted that the opposite quite often still happens. Research starts from the tools, without considering the goal of using these tools first. However, in this academic climate, the use of state-of-the-art methods is often the best way to attract funders. One of the consequences of this trend is that archaeology is becoming more exclusive. Institutions with access to newly developed tools thrive, whilst other, less well funded, institutions fall behind in the academic environment.

The next workshop was given by **Prof. Dr. Ir. Hans Huisman** from the University of Groningen and the Cultural Heritage Agency. The topic was science-based archaeology, which entails the application of scientific techniques in archaeological studies. This workshop employed a more hands-on approach. On a poster, many scientific techniques often employed in archaeology were listed. Each member of the workshop was given a piece of paper containing a specific field of archaeological studies. If a scientific technique on the poster could, according to us, be applied in the archaeological field on the piece of paper, it was written down. At first, all attendees did this individually for their assigned field of study. Then, everyone shared their ideas with the group. In doing so, it became clear that many techniques can be used in a lot of research and that each participant had their own ideas about the use of certain methods. It was further demonstrated that researchers need to think about the use of these scientific methodologies early on in the project, ideally in the conceptual phase. This requires the



Figure 2.
The conference's poster session (created by Yannic Rabou).

researcher to understand what they are working with. The necessary knowledge should come from discussions with experts, although this is currently not always the case.

Finally, **Dr. Gertjan Plets** (Utrecht University) moderated a workshop about story-telling. Through a series of anecdotal stories of the moderator's personal experiences, he started an active discussion with the participants on how stories and the way they are told relate to archaeology. It was noted that story-telling in a scientific context is often data-centred. Plets gave the example of studies on ancient DNA. These studies serve to study mobility and genetic relations between different groups of people in the past. Results in this field are often presented as a map or as percentages of similarity in the DNA, which people interpret in their own way without having much regard for the context of the data. This has on occasion led to aDNA being used as an advocate for political ideologies, for example in border conflicts. The group noted that archaeologists can, and perhaps should, be the ones to speak up and provide the necessary context. Plets thus concluded that 'scientists are loud, so archaeologists need to be equally loud.'

REMARKS AND CONCLUSION

The workshops on the 2022 ARCHON Day offered a broad view on interdisciplinarity in archaeology. They provided a place to talk amongst peers about experiences and desires. In this sense, the programme was successful in creating awareness of the issues that surround interdisciplinary archaeology. However, I find that no concrete results were offered. Talks about what the future should hold held little detail. It was noted, for example, that there is the need for communication and reflection on the techniques we use, which is already widely known. Unfortunately, the workshops did not bring concrete proposals on which steps to take on a personal level starting today either. Hopefully, the following ARCHON event on the topic will lay more focus on such ideas.

In general, the 2022 ARCHON Day succeeded in providing a platform for students, researchers, and other archaeologists to discuss interdisciplinarity together. Especially the keynote lecture offered some great insights and ideas. The workshops further allowed discussion on the topic, but in my opinion lacked in-depth problem fixing, which is something that I hoped for in the light of the conference's main goals. Nevertheless, this conference was an excellent place to meet your peers and talk to them about their work and experiences. In that aspect, the ARCHON Day can be called a success.

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KLEOS - AMSTERDAM BULLETIN OF ANCIENT STUDIES AND ARCHAEOLOGY

ISSUE6 | 2023

ISSN: 2468-1555